Bystanders to College Bullying: An Application of the Bystander Intervention Model

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Dedication

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Abstract

College bullying is a damaging health problem. Many campuses have bullying prevention efforts, yet few are tailored to bystanders. This is unfortunate, as peer bystanders are present in most bullying situations and know about incidents before campus officials. However, many bystanders fail to intervene due to fear and uncertainty about how to safely and effectively help. This dissertation utilized mixed methods research to pursue three goals. First, informed by the bystander intervention model (BIM; Latané & Darley, 1970), focus groups were conducted to explore how college students: 1) notice bullying, 2) interpret harm, 3) feel motivation to help, 4) know how to help, and 5) implement intervention decisions. These results uncover how bystanders communicatively construct their bullying experiences, as well as the range of possibilities and difficulties encountered when making intervention choices. The second goal of this project was to analyze whether participation in long-term focus groups serve as a bullying intervention in and of itself. A pre- and post-test design revealed that participants in the intervention group had higher bystander intervention scores. Initiatives that involve education and group-dialogue sessions have great potential to improve bystanders' attitudes and behaviors that support bullied peers. Last, students evaluated 28 bystander responses to bullying that varied along three dimensions: 1) *helpful* to *unhelpful*, 2) *safe* to *unsafe*, and 3) *direct* to *indirect*. These evaluations illustrate the range of intervention options as a mechanism to reduce passive and avoidant bystander roles. This study's findings encourage campuses to adopt bystander intervention campaigns to curtail bullying.

Keywords: blame attributions, bystander effect, cyberbullying, defender self-efficacy, discriminatory harassment, empathy, relational aggression, social support

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Bullying is a serious health problem that can happen at many life stages. It occurs when a person verbally or physically attacks another person, makes obscene gestures, intentionally isolates someone from a social group, and/or spreads rumors and lies about another person (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). The rise of technological sophistication and time spent online has moved bullying onto the Internet. Cyberbullying involves the use of inflicting harm on others through electronic devices (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Bullying is often thought of as a K-12 issue, which is a harmful misconception. Among college students, 15% report being bullied and 22% report being cyberbullied (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). Bullied college students often experience negative outcomes, such as depression, problematic alcohol use, and poor academic motivation and educational performance (Selkie, Kota, Chan, & Moreno, 2015; Young-Jones, Fursa, Byrket, & Sly, 2015). Bullying is clearly an issue on college campuses.

Although a notable portion of college students report *being* bullied, a greater proportion of students report *seeing* bullying. Among college students, 38% know someone who was cyberbullied and 42% saw someone being bullied (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). These data show that bullying is often a group phenomenon involving the target, perpetrator, and at least one peer bystander. Bystander interventions are a promising avenue for reducing college bullying. When bystanders intervene on behalf of bullied peers, they are effective at stopping bullying 57% of the time (Hawkins, Pepler, & Craig, 2001) and ameliorating its negative health effects (Oh & Hazler, 2009). Alarmingly, 54% to 83% of student bystanders *fail* to intervene on behalf of bullied

peers, often due to fear and uncertainty about how to help (Nickerson, Mele, & Princiotta, 2008; Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). More research is needed to understand the dynamics of college bullying from the perspective of peer bystanders.

The bystander intervention model (BIM) is theoretically grounded in social psychology and emerged as an explanation for the *bystander effect* (i.e., the phenomenon in which individuals are less likely to help during emergency situations when other people are present; Latané & Darley, 1970). The BIM identifies five steps bystanders undergo to intervene: 1) notice the event, 2) interpret the event as hurtful and therefore requiring an intervention, 3) accept responsibility for intervening, 4) know how to help, and 5) implement intervention decisions. Many students notice and interpret bullying as a risky situation that requires a response (Step 1 and 2; Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). Yet, most bystanders do not accept responsibility for intervening (Step 3), often because they fear retaliation. Many students also report lacking knowledge about their colleges' policies and reporting protocols for online and offline bullying (Step 4; Wozencroft, Campbell, Orel, Kimpton, & Leong, 2015). Last, many students report low self-efficacy in their ability to intervene in bullying, likely explaining why they are more likely to *not* intervene than to intervene (Step 5; Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). There is an evident need to improve bystander responses through a communication lens, given that bullying and intervention behaviors are inherently communicative in nature.

This dissertation utilized mixed methods research to pursue three goals. First, informed by the BIM (Latané & Darley, 1970), focus groups were conducted with college students to explore their experiences of and perspectives about witnessing peer bullying. The focus group data reveal how student bystanders: 1) recognize bullying

among peers, 2) conditions in which bullying is interpreted as a hurtful situation in need of intervention, 3) motivations for helping or failing to help bullied peers, 4) knowledge of bystander responses, and 5) perceptions of intervention decisions. These results uncover how bystanders communicatively construct their bullying experiences, as well as the range of possibilities and difficulties encountered when making intervention choices.

The second goal of this dissertation is to test a bystander intervention aimed at educating and encouraging students to support bullied peers. A pre- and post-test design assessed whether involvement in long-term focus groups serve as a bullying intervention in and of itself. Specifically, this project examined whether students who participated in the focus group intervention scored higher on measures assessing bystander interventions, empathy for bullied targets, and defender self-efficacy, as well as reduced victim-blame attributions. Bullying-prevention initiatives that include education and group-dialogue sessions have great potential to improve bystanders' attitudes and behaviors that support bullied peers.

The last goal of this project is to extend theoretical knowledge about bystander intervention behaviors to peer bullying. Student bystanders evaluated 28 intervention responses to online and offline bullying that vary along three dimensions: 1) *helpful* to *unhelpful*, 2) *safe* to *unsafe*, and 3) *direct* to *indirect*. These results illustrate the range of intervention options as a mechanism to reduce passive and avoidant bystander roles to bullying, as well as promote prosocial intervention responses. Overall, this study's findings offer practical implications for reducing college-student victimization through bystander intervention campaigns.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter starts by defining bullying and overviewing bullying in college. Then, the roles of bystanders in bullying situations are reviewed, along with the theoretical perspective that guides this project: the bystander intervention model. Next, internal and external factors that influence student-bystander interventions to peer bullying are discussed. The chapter concludes with a rationale for this dissertation.

Bullying Defined

There is agreement that bullying is a common and severe problem for students, yet a major research challenge is achieving consensus on the definition of bullying (Parada, 2006). There is no federal law that provides a definition of bullying for policy purposes and each state's legal definition of bullying differs (StopBullying.gov, 2019). Although there is no universal definition, Olweus' bullying definition is the most widely used and cited definition in the world (OBPP, 2019). Olweus (1993) states,

> A student is bullied when he/she is exposed, *repeatedly and over time*, to *negative actions* on the part of one or more other students…When someone *intentionally inflicts*, or attempts to inflict, injury of discomfort upon another… There should be an *imbalance of strength* (an asymmetric power relationship): The student who is exposed to the negative actions has difficulty defending him/herself and is somewhat helpless against the student(s) who harass (p. 9).

When analyzing Olweus' (1993) definition and the bullying literature, there are four criteria that are most common in defining bullying. These criteria include: 1) *aggressive behaviors* (i.e., bullying causes harm to others), 2) *intention to harm* (i.e., the harm caused is deliberate), 3) *power imbalance* (i.e., there is inequitable resource control

between the bully and target), and 4) *repetition over a period of time or is likely to repeat* (i.e., behaviors occur or are likely to occur more than once). There is consensus among researchers and policy makers that bullying is a subset of *aggression*. However, the other three criteria have been disputed (Espalage & Swearer, 2003). For example, those targeted by bullying and those engaging in bullying behavior often report that the bullying episodes occur between two equally powerful persons (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014). Nevertheless, these are the four criteria used for the definition of bullying in this project. The next section discusses each of these definitional criteria of bullying.

Aggression. The first definitional criterion of bullying is the use of harmful behavior. Bullying is a form of unwanted activity that hurts or humiliates another person physically or emotionally. The person being bullied does not want to be targeted, and experiences psychological, social, and/or physical distress in response to the bullying (Olweus, 1993). Researchers and policy makers agree that bullying is a subset of aggression (Espalage & Swearer, 2003; StopBullying.gov, 2019).

There are two different forms of aggression. First, direct aggression involves situations in which a perpetrator inflicts harm on someone either physically or verbally, in a face-to-face situation or context in which the target knows the perpetrator's identity. This includes overt and observable confrontations, such as pushing, hitting, and name-calling (Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Historically, research has largely focused on direct aggression, and consistently finds that men use more direct aggression than women do. One explanation for this gender difference is that direct aggression would have been costlier for ancestral women who take care of offspring by risking bodily harm. Men benefitted more from displays of direct aggression that

enhanced their status for competition (Hyde, 1984; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). This easily observable form of bullying might be another reason why developmental psychologists assumed that boys were far more aggressive than were girls. For example, in observational studies, it is easy to observe and document slapping, hitting, and kicking, but far more difficult to observe and document private conversations in which one girl threatens to tell everyone the other another girl is a "slut" (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

In the late 1960s, researchers began considering a wider range of aggressive behaviors that were subtler and more secretive in nature. The second type of aggression is indirect, which involves inflicting harm on someone psychologically to damage their social relations (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukianen, 1992). Indirect aggression was first introduced in reference to behaviors that harmed someone through rejection and exclusion (Feshbach, 1969), and was later used for behaviors such as gossiping, rumor spreading, social manipulation, and becoming friends with someone out of revenge (Björkqvist et al., 1992). Crick and Grotpeter (1995) coined the term *relational aggression* to explain these indirect aggressive behaviors that damage an individual's social status or reputation in a peer group. Women tend to use more indirect aggression than do men (Hess & Hagen, 2006). Historically, women who attack the reputations of other women would be in a better position to compete for men. Women are socialized to value relationships more than men, so women tend to rely more on indirect forms of aggression to harm relationships than direct forms (Hyde, 1984; Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974).

With the expansion of technology, a new form of aggression has emerged. Cyberbullying occurs when someone uses electronic devices to inflict harm on others (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Cyberbullying reflects aspects of both direct and indirect

aggression. The key distinction between direct and indirect aggression is whether or not the target witnesses the aggressive acts and knows the perpetrator's identity (Wyckoff & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Direct forms of cyberbullying include situations in which bullies are easily identifiable by the target, such as someone threatening someone from their identifiable phone number or social media account. Indirect forms of cyberbullying involve situations in which someone sends anonymous attacks via technology, because the aggressor's identity is not immediately known (No Bullying, 2019). Both direct and indirect forms of aggression cause distress for targets (Olweus, 1993).

Intention. The second criterion of bullying is that the perpetrator has *intention to harm*. Many bullying definitions contain terms such as, *intent, deliberate*, and *purposeful* (Goldsmith & Howie, 2014). Indeed, most definitions of aggression include some form of intentionality on the part of the aggressor. For instance, the CDC defines aggression as: "the *intentional* use of harmful behavior(s), threatened or actual, against another person" (Gladden et al., 2014, p. 8). Moreover, the most common definition of aggression states,

> Human aggression is any behavior directed toward another individual that is carried out with the proximate (immediate) intent to cause harm. In addition, the perpetrator must believe that the behavior will harm the target, and that the target is motivated to avoid the behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 27).

The criterion of intention distinguishes bullying from accidental harm. A student who mistakenly bumps into someone while walking down the hall is not considered a perpetrator; a bully has a motive when inflicting harm (Olweus, 1993). Interpersonal communication requires that a sender and receiver are interdependent (i.e., influence one

another) and engage in message exchange to achieve goals (Goldreich, Juba, & Sudan, 2012). Bullying can be considered a goal-oriented form of interpersonal communication.

Perpetrators engage in proactive and/or reactive aggression, which are both enacted intentionally. Proactive or instrumental aggression is a goal-directed and premeditated behavior that seeks to achieve an objective (Crapanzano, Frick, Childs, & Terranova, 2011). Proactive aggression is motivated by the perceived benefits of gaining or maintaining social resources, such as popularity, respect, visibility, and dominance. This is why bullies often target others in front of spectators in order to receive confirmation of their high status (Salmivalli, 2010).

Those who bully can also use reactive aggression, which are behaviors used in response to a provocation. Reactive aggression is characterized by impulsive and defensive behaviors used in retort to a perceived threat or an attributional style that perceives hostile intent in others (Crapanzano et al., 2011). In the case of reactive aggression, individuals often experience anger or fear, and respond aggressively to someone with the intention to defend themselves and cause pain to the other. Reactive aggression is motivated by protection, retaliation, or perceiving someone as deserving of harm (Hamm, Newton, & Chisholm, 2015). Individuals identified as bullies and bullied targets often fall in the reactive aggression group, meaning that someone bullies them and they bully back in response (Cook et al., 2010). Whereas proactive aggression displays premeditated intention for ultimate goals, reactive aggression displays impulsive and defensive intention for proximate goals (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

Although the criterion of intention is used in many bullying definitions, it has been problematic for some researchers and policy makers. Legally, admitting intent to

harm is an admission of guilt. Many bullies who are indicted are inclined to deny intent, even in cases in which they overtly harassed others. Bullies often feel justified in getting payback at their targets and are reluctant to see themselves as perpetrators. Those who bully often blame the target for provoking the behavior and thus shift responsibility to the target (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014). Some bullies also reframe the incident and claim they were just *messing around* and *not purposefully* trying to harm others (Bazelon, 2014). It can be common for bullies to fail to admit intent, which creates complications if the bully, target, and observers have different interpretations about whether the bullying was enacted on purpose (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014).

Another problematic situation regarding intentionality is *accidental bullying.* Accidental bullying involves incidents during which someone says or does something that is not intended as harmful, but is experienced as harmful by recipients (Scheff, 2013). Accidental bullying can be considered microaggressions, which are utterances or behaviors that cause the receiver to feel harmed or hurt, even when the offender did not intend such harm (Sue, 2010). Microaggressions are often signifiers of ignorance or insensitivity, rather than an intent to harm others. For example, if a group of friends set up an online profile featuring several women (one being their friend) where people comment on their attractiveness. The friends intend to show the friend that others think she is pretty, yet through the process, people say rude comments and the woman is left feeling hurt (Greer, 2013). Although the friends did not intend to cause harm, their well-intentioned actions did. Accidental or incidental harm that is a product of actions that are meant to help is not considered aggression because it is not intended (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Referring back to the prior example, those friends would likely remove

the page after seeing the harm done. If the friends continued to post on the site after knowing about the harm done, that would then be considered bullying. This dissertation conceptualizes bullying as behaviors that involve intent to harm on behalf of the person bullying, while recognizing the complications that can arise with proving intent.

Power imbalance. The third criterion in the definition of bullying is that there is an *imbalance of power* between the target(s) and perpetrator(s) (Olweus, 1993). The type of power relevant for bullying situations is *relational.* Relational power involves relationships and interactions in which one person can control someone's thoughts or behaviors (Allwood, 1980). Power is inherent in relationships and social groups by virtue of differing characteristics and resources among those involved (Olweus, 1993). Social interactions are a dynamic process via which all action and reaction revolves around negotiating, and sometimes vying for dominance and power (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Individuals possess certain resources in a relationship that permit them to exhibit power over others. Even if individuals have similar power resources in a relationship, someone can use bullying to increase their relative power.

There are various types of power resources in relationships and interactions. Six common power resources in bullying episodes include: 1) being able to *physically hurt others*, often due to superior size or physical capabilities; 2) being *numerically superior*, such as a group ganging up on one person; 3) being *confident* and *assertive*, which propels someone to hurt others without worrying about how that affects their reputations; 4) having superior *social* or *manipulation* skills, which helps turn people against someone; 5) having greater *social status* and *influence on others*, such as popularity, identification with a majority group (e.g., race), and access to private or embarrassing

information; and 6) being able to *sophistically hurt* others, such as making fun of someone in a subtle way, which allows the bullying to continue (Rigby, 2008). In the context of cyberbullying, power often stems from technological skills and the exploitation of anonymity afforded by digital communication technologies (Patchin & Hinduja, 2006). Perpetrators usually have one or more of these resources that they attempt to use to control targets.

Within asymmetrical power relationships, people use their power resource to exert control over others who they perceive as subordinate. There is no exercise of power by a bully unless the target yields and obeys (Allwood, 1980). The target must *perceive* the bully's power resources as *valuable* and is thus influenced by the bully's attempt to exert dominance. This perceived valuable power imbalance makes it challenging for targets to resist the attack and defend themselves (Olweus, 1993). Power differentials are dynamic (Allwood, 1980). Someone might be powerful in one situation (e.g., smart in class), but less powerful in another situation (e.g., disliked among peers).

There are two ways that power is communicated in relationships. An *imperative* strategy involves one person directly attempting to control aspects of someone's thoughts or behavior (Allwood, 1980). Imperative strategies often involve direct confrontations, either face-to-face or online, such as physical or verbal attacks or demands. *Indirect* strategies involve getting others to adopt one's beliefs about someone or something. This occurs when someone conveys information to another person that can govern that person's way of thinking and acting (Allwood, 1980). Indirect strategies in bullying often involve spreading rumors or gossip about the target, either face-to-face or online.

Bullies abuse their power advantage to systematically threaten or harm others

with a power disadvantage. Bullying is a strategic behavior that enables students to gain and maintain attention and respect (Salmivalli, 2010). Although a bully's pursuit of high status is an individual motivation, seeking status is group-related. Status is someone's relative standing in the peer hierarchy. Bullies select their targets, as well as the time and place for the attacks to ensure goal achievement. Bullies often choose targets who are perceived as submissive, insecure, physically weak, or in a low-power group position (Salmivalli, 2010). Rather than attacking secretly, bullies often attack targets when peers are present, which occurs during 85–88% of bullying situations (Atlas & Pepler, 2001; Hawkins et al., 2001). This allows bullies to demonstrate their power to the group.

In sum, bullied targets are not on equal footing with their perpetrators. However, Rodriguez (2014) argues that a power dynamic provides *insight* to *understanding* bullying yet should not be used as a criterion to *define* bullying. Rather, identifying power imbalances can inform effective intervention strategies. For instance, conflict resolution and mediation via which both parties come together to negotiate a solution are more appropriate for those with equal footing in the relationship, whereas when parties have notable power differentials, conflict resolution involving both parties is not as successful (Rodriguez, 2014). Many targets report feeling upset when having to face their perpetrator in a mediation or conflict resolution meeting, particularly when they regularly see that person (StopBullying.gov, 2019). Understanding power imbalances in bullying can provide insight into the type of situation and effective resolution strategies.

Repetition. The last criterion in the definition is that bullying is carried out repeatedly and over time (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014; Olweus, 1993). Yet, there is no consensus on the frequency of behavior needed to satisfy this criterion. Defining bullying

as repetitive is argued to be important because that is what makes bullying so emotionally or psychologically damaging. Frequently bullied students demonstrate higher levels of internalizing problems and compromised academic outcomes compared with those who are more intermittently bullied. Hinduja and Patchin (2015) argue, "the target often alters his/her daily behaviors to avoid personal contact with the bully because it is assumed that something bad will happen if they interact" (para. 4). The persistent nature of bullying creates a dynamic in which the target worries about what the bully will do next.

Moreover, Englander (2013), argues that bullying must be persistent and warns against overusing the term for single acts of hostility. She states, "It's this unrelenting cruelty and callous nature of such an environment that is watered down when we include every social slight or quarrel under the bullying rubric…if everyone's a victim, then no one's a victim" (2013, para. 12). Englander suggests that overusing the term "bullying" most hurts those facing traumatic incidents whose pain can be overshadowed with an increased reporting of single bullying incidents.

Some bullying definitions specify that behaviors are repeated, whereas other definitions claim behaviors that are *repetitive, likely to be repeated, or sufficiently severe* are bullying (StopBullying.gov, 2019). This distinction emphasizes that bullying produces immediate distress, as well as the threat of future attack (Lee, 2006). Thus, a single incident of aggression where a bully makes it clear to a target that they will be attacked again *or* severe aggression constitutes bullying. Physical aggression is usually the only form of bullying that is reprimanded with one instance (StopBullying.gov, 2019). For example, if someone punches a peer for the first and only time, that one hit is

punishable. For other forms of bullying, the behavior usually must re-occur, or a single traumatic incident raises the expectation and fear of continued aggression.

Bullying involves aggressive behaviors, yet whether it involves intent, power differentials, and repetition is more contested. One way to deal with these definitional concerns is to determine consent in the bullying process. For instance, if someone demeans another person, the target can respond in several ways and this response can or cannot signal consent. The target may say nothing and walk away or tell the person to stop because it hurts. If the target tells the person to stop, yet the aggression continues, this suggests that it is repetitive (i.e., it continues after the target requests for the person to stop). This also signals to the person that their behaviors are hurtful and, if it continues, shows more intentionality. It is harder for bullies to say they were not intending to cause harm if a clear request was made on behalf of the target to stop. If targets experience victimization after telling the person that their behavior is *unwelcome*, this situation is bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015; Olweus, 1993). On the basis of what was discussed above, I define bullying as: *Intentional behaviors that harm someone (physical, verbal, or emotional) in-person or online. Those bullying have more power, whereas those targeted have difficulty defending themselves. Bullying is repeated, though it can be a one-time severe incident.* The next section identifies the different types of bullying.

Types of Bullying

There are four types of bullying. First, in college, bullying is most often *relational,* which involves behaviors intended to damage or manipulate someone's social relationships or feelings of acceptance (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). Relational bullying is often achieved indirectly through gossip and rumor

spreading, as well as nonverbal behaviors that demolish a target's self-esteem, such as exclusion (You & Bellmore, 2014). Women are more likely than men to experience relational bullying, and young adults engage in relational bullying more frequently as direct forms of bullying decrease (Rue, 2018). Relational bullying can be more emotionally harmful than verbal or physical forms, because targets might not recognize who their perpetrators are and do not get the opportunity for initial defense.

Second, online bullying is a common occurrence for college students. *Cyberbullying* involves the infliction of harm on others through electronic devices. This includes using technology to physically threaten someone, say harmful words, or exclude, impersonate, or distribute someone's information without their consent (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Cyberbullying is more prevalent among women compared to men (Rue, 2018). There are three characteristics that make cyberbullying unique from direct bullying. First, cyberbullies often attack anonymously. Targets might not know who is harming them, making it harder to trace and manage (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015). Second, cyberbullying has a large, potentially permanent, audience. A single message can remain visible and be viewed repeatedly by vast audiences (Tokunaga, 2010). Third, cyberbullying can be an easier medium for perpetrators to inflict damage. There is greater physical distance between the bully and target, so harm can be done at any time and from anywhere, thereby preventing immediate responses such as retaliation. The perpetrator does not see the immediate verbal and nonverbal responses from the target and may not recognize the harm caused by their actions (Hinduju & Patchin, 2015).

The last two forms of bullying are more overt and direct. *Verbal bullying* is directed face-to-face at a target, such as name-calling, belittling, slurs, and threats (Rue,

2018). *Physical bullying* is the most visible form of aggression, and includes pushing, hitting, kicking, and destroying property. Men are involved with direct bullying more than women (Rue, 2018). In general, young adults are less likely to experience direct bullying compared to indirect. Many college students perceive physical fights as risky and pointless (Twenge, 2017). They tend to therefore engage in more subtle and hidden bullying behaviors (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; You & Bellmore, 2014).

There are two other types of institutionally sanctioned aggression that occur on college campuses that are distinct from bullying. First, hazing involves abusive behaviors targeted at students seeking membership in university organizations, sports, or clubs. Second, sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual conduct that interferes with a student's ability to learn, work, or participate in school activities (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; Rosenberg, 2011). Although these issues are evident in the lives of college students, this project focuses on behaviors identified as *bullying* or *discriminatory harassment*. Many forms of bullying overlap with the federal anti-discrimination laws enforced by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Harassment is a form of bullying when it is based on a student's ethnicity, race, national origin, gender, sex, age, or disability (state laws differ for sexual orientation; StopBullying.gov, 2019). All forms of harassment can be considered bullying (e.g., someone's race is attacked), yet not all forms of bullying are considered harassment (e.g., someone's weight is attacked).

Bullying in College

There is a different legal framework for students involved with bullying once they reach the age of 18. The consequences for bullying are often harsher in college than for younger students who are less likely to face legal repercussions and expulsion from

school (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Bullying policies differ from college to college and are addressed in student conduct codes (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). College campuses have a responsibility to provide a safe physical and digital environment (Patchin & Hinduja, 2012). One such way to achieve this is through the development and implementation of bullying policies. Unfortunately, many campus policies do not include specific types of bullying, how to follow up with incidents, or how to support targets (Marsh, McGee, Hemphill, & Williams, 2011; Smith, et al., 2012). Ambiguous policies create uncertainty for students and college personnel, and this uncertainty can lead to a reluctance to help bullied students, and thus, there is less reporting of incidents (Bhat, 2008; Cassidy, Brown, & Jackson, 2012).

The role of peer bystanders in college bullying is particularly important, as victimized college students can be more hesitant to report bullying to campus officials. Willingness to seek help about online and offline bullying from parents and authorities tend to decrease with age (Dowling & Carey, 2013; Wozencroft et al., 2015). This is likely an outcome of their developmental need for autonomy. Many college students fall within the unique period of emerging adulthood, which is characterized by the significance of independence (Arnett, 2003). Emerging adults may think that they should manage issues, such as bullying, on their own (deLara, 2012). Most college students are living on their own for the first time, and rely less on their parents and more on their friends and peers (Arnett, 2003). With growing diverse social networks in college, peer relationships are greatly valued for emerging adults. Peers have a prominent role in bullying interventions, as there is less authority supervision on and off campuses (You & Bellmore, 2014).

This dissertation focuses on bystander interventions for peer-to-peer bullying, and not bullying situations that involves professors, faculty members, administrators, or college personnel. There are substantially higher instances of college students witnessing peer-to-peer bullying (42%) compared with professor-to-student bullying (4%; MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010). Bystander strategies differ greatly due to the power dynamics and tightly defined roles between students and instructors compared to peers (Goodboy, Bolkan, Myers, & Zhao, 2011). Therefore, peer bystander interventions to bullying is the focal point of this project.

College Students and Technology

The majority of today's college students are a part of Generation Z (*Gen Zers*), which includes individuals born since 1997. Roughly 71% of college students identify as Gen Zers, followed by 22% as Generation Y (i.e., Millennials born between 1981 to 1996), and 7% as Generation X (i.e., Baby Boomers born between 1965 to 1980; Official Enrollment Statistics, 2018). There are unique characteristics of Gen Zers, most of which stem from society's increased emergence of technology. Gen Zers have experienced a drastic reduction of face-to-face communication (Twenge, 2017). Even when in the physical presence of others, Gen Zers spend much time focused on using technology, also known as *absent presence* (e.g., friends eating together, while everyone is absorbed with their phones; Rue, 2018). Given that communication is essential for relationship development, Gen Zers may be at risk of developing and deepening interpersonal relationships (Rue, 2018). Although, they have quickly adapted to technology in terms of developing intimacy (Adler, 2018). Gen Zers are avid social media users and prefer to use Instagram and Snapchat to maintain friendships. Texting is especially important for

young adults, who exchange roughly 60–100 text messages a day. They prefer to convey meaning through emojis and gifs rather than words, finding that they can say more with less (e.g., express an idea using five words and an emoji; Adler, 2018; Rue, 2018). Gen Zers use cell phones, social media, and texting for interpersonal communication.

The easy access to technology contributes to the "24/7, always on" nature of society (Dowdell & Clayton, 2018, p. 2). Gen Zers are surrounded by vast online content and can process massive amounts of information rapidly (Dowdell & Clayton, 2018). The digital world that they grew up in and inhabit has offered many opportunities to view and connect with others who are different. As the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history, Gen Zers show awareness and concern about inequality. Gen Zers identify prejudice and racism among the top three of their concerns, in addition to education and financial issues (Rue, 2018). They show more tolerant attitudes toward same-sex relationships, as well as reject firm gender binaries and roles (Rue, 2018). Although they have a heightened concern related to inequity and justice, they maintain strong risk concerns. Safety issues surrounding school shootings and domestic terrorism have been huge parts of Gen Zers' early lives. This generational group was taught early on and often about avoiding "stranger danger" (Rue, 2017). They tend to engage in less risky behavior and avoid dangerous situations (Twenge, 2017). Gen Zers are less likely to have prejudicial attitudes, yet they might not be prepared to behaviorally confront it.

The Bystander Intervention Model

There has been research on the role of bystanders in harmful situations for over 50 years. Research has more recently analyzed bystanders in the context of bullying. The bystander intervention model (BIM; Latané & Darley, 1970) is a theoretical perspective

that identifies a five-step response process: 1) notice the event, 2) interpret it as hurtful and in need of help, 3) accept responsibility for intervening, 4) know how to help, and 5) implement intervention decisions. Many bystanders notice and interpret bullying as a risky situation that requires an intervention response (Step 1 and 2; Rigby & Johnson, 2005). Yet, many bystanders do not accept responsibility for intervening (Step 3), often due to fear of retaliation from the bully. Many bystanders believe that their possible actions will not be effective (Step 4; Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005). Uncertainty and a lack of knowledge about a university's reporting protocols for online and offline bullying is a barrier to reporting incidents (Bhat, 2008; Wozencroft et al., 2015). Last, peer bystanders intervene in bullying only 20% to 45% of the time (Step 5; Nickerson et al., 2008; Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008), which illustrates the dire need to improve bystander behaviors.

Bystanders can adopt various functional intervention roles that direct behavioral strategies. First, there is the *defender*, who actively helps the bullied target, such as confrontation, getting them away from the situation, and offering support to alleviate pain. The second type of bystander is the *reinforcer,* who provides support to the bullying, such as watching and cheering it on. The third type of bystander is the *assistant*, who participates in the bullying (e.g., joining in with name-calling). The last type of bystander is the *outsider,* who remains uninvolved or is not influenced by the bullying (e.g., ignoring it, doing nothing; Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli, Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1996). Bystanders fall within one or more of these roles during bullying incidents. This project aims to motivate students to become bullying *defenders*.

A frequently invoked explanatory mechanism of the BIM is the diffusion of responsibility due to the bystander effect. The *bystander effect* was the first explanation for the lack of inventions during emergency situations (Darley & Latané, 1968). The bystander effect refers to the inhibiting effects in the presence of others on helping behavior. Diffusion of responsibility infers that people are less likely to offer help to someone if there are others present, because they perceive responsibility as being shared between all present, and thus see themselves as being less personally responsible (Latané & Nida, 1981). In Darley and Latané's (1968) first experiment, participants overhead an epileptic seizure and were led to believe that they alone heard the emergency or that several others were present. When hearing a confederate suffering from a seizure, 85% of participants who thought they were alone reported it quickly, but only 31% of those who thought there were other witnesses did so. The presence of others during hurtful situations lower the psychological costs of nonintervention (Latané & Nida, 1981).

Another explanation of the bystander effect is pluralistic ignorance, which is the tendency for individuals in a group to mislead each other about an emergency situation (Piliavin, Rodin, & Piliavin, 1969). For instance, someone might perceive an emergency as a non-emergency because other bystanders remain calm and do not act. A bystander can infer the severity of the incident from assessing the cues and reactions from other bystanders in the situation. Other research on the bystander effect found that the perceived anonymity of the bystander influences intervention. Bystanders who were anonymous (i.e., the victim was not aware of their presence) and aware of other bystanders when seeing an emergency had slower reactions times to reporting it (Schwartz & Gottlieb, 1980). Similar results have been found for bullying. Bystanders

feel less responsible to help and are less likely to intervene when there are a larger number of witnesses in a cyberbullying incident (Obermaier, Fawzi, & Koch, 2016) and perceived anonymity of bystanders (Brody & Vangelisti, 2016). As the number of bystanders and perceived anonymity increases in bullying situations, observers feel less personal responsibility to help.

Internal factors. There are several other important internal and external factors that influence bystander reactions. The internally-focused factors relevant to the current project include empathy, attributions of blame, and self-efficacy.

Emotions. Bystanders' responses are influenced by their emotional reactions when witnessing bullying. *Empathy* is the ability to share with or relate to another's emotions and is consistently found as a predictor of defending behavior in bullying (Freis & Gurung, 2013; Nickerson, Aloe, Livingston, & Feeley, 2014). Bystanders who empathize with bullied targets are more likely to intervene and provide support (Salmivalli, 2010). Bystanders' emotional reactions to cyberbullying also affect interventions. Bystanders who were more upset by seeing cyberbullying were more likely to provide the target with support (Macháčková, Dedkova, Sevcikova, & Cerna, 2013). Furthermore, students who were previously cyberbullied were more likely to report the incident than were those students who had not been cyberbullied (Wozencroft et al., 2015). Bystanders who were previously bullied tend to share with and relate to the feelings of observed targets.

One of the few studies (Nickerson et al., 2014) to assess empathy at each step in the BIM (Latané & Darley, 1970) found empathy as the strongest unique predictor. Bystanders who are more empathetic are more likely to: 1) notice bullying, 2) interpret

harm, 3) accept personal responsibility to help, 4) know how to intervene, and 5) implement a bullying intervention (Nickerson et al., 2014). When bystanders are emotionally aroused when viewing bullying they are more likely to intervene.

When bystanders feel *fear* and *sympathy* for the target, they are motivated to take actions to ensure their safety (Barhight, Hubbard, & Hyde, 2013). In combination with feeling *anger*, this provides strength to face a difficult bullying confrontation. Yet, feeling only empathy and sympathy for the target is not enough. Bystanders who want to stop bullying need emotional competence (i.e., adapting behavior to particular circumstances) and knowledge of effective responses (Step 4 of the BIM; Ahmed, 2005). Another emotional reaction that influences interventions is *fear* of personal safety. When bystanders feared that intervening would put themselves at risk (e.g., retaliation), they were less likely to help (Rigby & Johnson, 2005; Thornberg, Tenebaum, Varjas, Meyers, Jungert, & Vanegas, 2012). Bystanders weigh their perceived benefits and costs to interventions. If intervening means they are jeopardizing their own safety, this can be costly to bystanders. Putting oneself at risk of harm can prevent interventions, especially when bystanders do not expect support from others (Atlas & Pepler, 2001). The emotional reactions of bystanders observing bullying influences intervention decisions.

Individuals identified as bullies or bully-targets (i.e., those who bully others and get bullied; Center for Disease Control, 2015) tend to feel *satisfaction* and *excitement* as audience members, and thus they are less likely to intervene (e.g., someone is excited while watching a physical fight and encourages it; Thornberg et al., 2012). Individuals who have bullied others tend to demonstrate aggressive behaviors when observing incidents by assisting perpetrators or reinforcing bullying. Bystanders with a history of

bullying often experience excitement and satisfaction vicariously through assisting or reinforcing bullying, and tend to act as unhelpful bystanders (Oh & Hazler, 2009). Taken together, the type of emotion experienced in response to bullying determines bystanders' reactions.

Blame attributions. Attributions of blame influence bystander interventions. Considering bullying within an attributional framework elucidates the cognitive processes guiding bystander behaviors. Weiner's (1995) attribution theory posits that following a negative event, observers try to understand why it happened. Their causal inference (i.e., attribution), in turn, affects their emotional reaction. This cognitive–affective reaction then guides subsequent behavior (Weiner, 1995). For instance, when determining whether to aid a person in need, individuals show the lowest rates of helping behavior when they make internal and controllable attributions to the actor (e.g., they brought that on themselves). However, making uncontrollable attributions and feeling sympathy and empathy for the person increases helping behavior (Rudolph, Roesch, Greitemeyer, & Weiner, 2004). In the context of bullying, when the bystander blamed the target for being bullied (e.g., "They provoked it"), they were more likely to justify bullying, and less likely to intervene (Thornberg et al., 2012). Bullying might be considered unfair when the bully attacks characteristics that are out of the target's control (e.g., race), whereas, bullying may be considered fair when a target is blamed for their own behavior (e.g., clothing; Desmet et al., 2012). When students blame bullied targets and believe or spread rumors created by the bully, this contributes to non-intervention and a greater chance that the bystanders join in with the bullying (Thornberg et al., 2012).

Similar attributional processes operate online. Higher levels of blame attributed to cyberbullied targets decrease bystander empathy, which in turn reduces their motivation to help (Runions & Bak, 2015; Schacter, Greenberg, & Juvonen, 2016). In one study, participants read a hypothetical cyberbullying situation including embarrassing pictures circulated online and explained why they thought it happened. About one-third of the bystanders attributed the incident to internal and controllable factors of the target (e.g., their photos invoked bullying), compared to characteristics uncontrollable by the target (e.g., unattractiveness; Holfeld, 2014). Bystanders who perceive someone's online behavior as provocative or inappropriate (e.g., sharing intimate feelings) tend to blame the target, experience less empathy, and not help (Weber, Ziegele, & Schauber, 2013). Cyberbullied targets who disclose personal information about their relationships, as opposed to more generic information, are perceived as more deserving of bullying (Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2012). Bystanders interpret posting highly personal information as violating disclosure norms or *netiquette* (Vitak, 2012), thus increasing target blame. Blame attributions and empathy influence bystander interventions.

Self-efficacy. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory suggests that having the skills needed to intervene might not be sufficient if individuals do not feel efficacious enough to enact those skills. Self-efficacy reflects people's confidence in their ability to accomplish a task (Bandura, 1997). Self-efficacy is determined by past behavior (e.g., prior interventions), vicarious experiences (e.g., observing others intervene), encouragement versus discouragement from others, and physiological and affective states during the event (Bandura, 1997). The decision to intervene in situations relies on bystanders' sense of efficacy. Bystanders are more likely to intervene when they feel

capable and have the necessary resources to help. Bystanders are also less likely to intervene when they think that other bystanders are more competent than they are (Latané & Darley, 1970).

Social self-efficacy reflects people's beliefs in their capacity to act successfully in difficult *social* situations (Bandura, 2001). Bystanders select a mode of intervention based on how effective they perceive their possible actions to be. Without having a strong belief in one's ability to successfully intervene in a social situation, such intervention is inhibited (Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). Bystanders with high social self-efficacy are more likely to defend bullied targets in online and offline situations, whereas bystanders with low social self-efficacy are more likely to engage in passive behavior or to involve others (Gini et al., 2008; Pöyhönen, Juvonen, & Salmivalli, 2010; Thornberg et al., 2012). When Gini et al. (2008) examined whether empathy or social self-efficacy differentiated between passive and defending bystander groups in bullying, they concluded that empathy did not differentiate between the two groups, but that high social self-efficacy was associated with defending behavior and low social self-efficacy was associated with passive behavior.

Defender self-efficacy (i.e., one's perceived capacity to defend and stand up for others) is positively associated with defending behavior and negatively associated with passive behavior during bullying (Pöyhönen et al., 2012; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). High levels of defender self-efficacy motivate students to help bullied peers, whereas low levels inhibit interventions. It is not only essential for bystanders to improve their skills, but also their beliefs that they can make a difference in bullying (Thornberg et al., 2012). A bystander's self-efficacy to intervene influences their intervention decisions.

External factors. There are several important external factors that influence peer bystander interventions. The factors of relevance to the current study are relational and situational factors.

Relational. Bystander behaviors are influenced by relational factors. *Peer relations*, specifically the bystander's relationship to the bully and target, often determine interventions. Bystanders are less likely to intervene in a situation when they are relationally close to the bully (Chaux, 2005; Oh & Hazler, 2009). Bystanders who reinforced (e.g., cheered or encouraged it) or assisted bullying (e.g., engaged in name-calling) were often close friends with the bully (Levine, Cassidy, & Brazier, 2002). Also, college-student bystanders who are relationally close with those who commit physical assault are less likely to report the assaults to police or authorities (Nicksa, 2013).

The bystander's relationship with the bullied target also affects interventions. Observers are more likely to exhibit helping behavior when they are close to bullied targets (Chaux, 2005; Oh & Hazler, 2009). Closeness with the target also influences online bystander behaviors. Bystanders who are close with the cyberbullied target are more likely to provide social support and to actively defend them, and to use less passive observation (Brody & Vangelisti, 2016). Bystanders' closeness with the cyberbullied target has the largest effect size on intervention behavior, regardless of the presence of other bystanders, suggesting that the relationship between the bystander and target is a key determinant of online interventions. A bystander is also more likely to provide supportive behavior online and offline when a bullied target directly requests help (Macháčková et al., 2013; Markey, 2000). Overall, relational closeness with those involved in bullying influences bystander reactions.

The bully's social status also affects bystanders' intervention motivations. If a bystander considers the bully as highly respected in the social hierarchy among peers, the bystander is less likely to help the target (Thornberg et al., 2012). This is particularly the case for bystanders drawn to popular bullies, as they might reinforce the bullying in hopes to become popular themselves (Juvonen & Ho, 2008). If the bully is considered lower in the social hierarchy rank, bystander interventions are not inhibited (Thornberg et al., 2012). Susceptibility to peer influence also influences bystander interventions. Students who are highly susceptible to peer influence tend to change their perspectives and behaviors to match those of their friends (Allen, Porter, & McFarland, 2006; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). Some bullies are perceived as socially prominent, so they can exert influence on their peer group. Given that young adults value their peer relationships, they may follow suit with their peers' negative behavior to avoid negative consequences on their social relationships and status. Students highly susceptible to peer influence more often assist and reinforce bullying (You & Bellmore, 2014).

The bystander's relationship with other witnesses in the emergency situation also influences intervention responses. Latané and Rodin (1969) found that pairs of friends intervened significantly faster in emergency situations compared to pairs of strangers. The friends tended to discuss the incident and arrive at a mutual plan of action. Latané and Rodin argued that friends were less likely than strangers to misinterpret each other's lack of action and feel less embarrassed about acting in front of each other, thus making it less likely that pluralistic ignorance occurs. Moreover, Latané and Darley (1970) found that bystanders who believed a friend was present in an emergency were more likely to report the situation and did so faster than individuals who thought a stranger was present.

Friends know that they will see each other again and may act quickly to protect each other's high opinion of the other (Latané & Darley, 1970). Clearly, the bystander's relationship with the target, bully, and other witnesses affect intervention responses.

Situational. Situational factors in bullying influence bystander reactions. An ambiguous emergency leads bystanders to look to one another for help with defining the situation. If a bystander observes inaction from other witnesses, they are likely to not act, as well (i.e., pluralistic ignorance). Yet, if the need for help is clear and unambiguous, a bystander does not need to attend to the cues of other witnesses (Latané & Darley, 1970). In addition, the point in time at which an observer is exposed to the event as it unfolds influences reactions. The late-comer in the process or one who comes upon the aftermath is more likely than the early arriver to encounter ambiguity and situational uncertainty, such as what happened to the victim, how severe the injuries may be, and what actions, if any, may already have been taken (Piliavin, Piliavin, & Broll, 1976). Those bystanders exposed only to the aftermath of a crisis help far less than do those who witnessed the whole situation happen. Witnessing the entire event as it unfolds might trigger an impulsive rush to help, whereas the bystander who arrives in the aftermath of a crisis has time to diffuse responsibility to help (Piliavin et al., 1976).

The specific type of bullying and severity of aggression also influence bystander interventions. Tapper and Boulton (2005) examined whether bystanders' reactions were different depending on the type of aggression that they witnessed. Bystanders were more likely to support bullying when witnessing *direct relational* (30%), *indirect verbal* (39%), and *indirect relational* aggression (38%). In contrast, bystanders' support for the aggressor was significantly lower when they witnessed *direct physical* (17%) and *direct*

verbal aggression (12%; Tapper & Boulton, 2005). Nicksa (2013) also found that bystanders to physical assaults at college are most likely to report it to the police or campus authorities. The severity and type of bullying influence bystander behaviors.

Cyberbullying creates more ambiguity for bystander interventions. In one study, 76% of college students were uncertain about how to report cyberbullying. Because cyberbullying occurs on a digital platform, students are often unsure about the responsibility of universities when it occurs outside teaching hours or off campus. Students are also unsure to whom they should report cyberbullying within the university (Bhat, 2008; Cassidy et al., 2013). Even when students know the college's reporting protocols, there are several reasons why they are reluctant to report online incidents. First, students feel more confident in managing cyberbullying incidents themselves and would likely not report it to college personnel (Wozencroft et al., 2015). Yet, as the severity of cyberbullying increases, individuals feel more intention to intervene or report it (Obermaier et al., 2016). Students are motivated to report cyberbullying when they perceive it as pervasive and chronic. Second, students can feel that reporting incidents is not useful, given that authorities have less ability to manage online behaviors (deLara, 2012; Wozencraft et al., 2015). College students are motivated to report cyberbullying when they know that they will receive support and that the behaviors will cease. Overall, the current bullying literature suggests that empathy, causal attributions, self-efficacy, relational closeness, and situation severity influence bystander interventions.

Purpose of this Dissertation

Three goals are pursued for this dissertation. First, the BIM has largely been quantitatively applied to study bullying by examining factors that lead to or inhibit

bystander interventions (e.g., empathy, self-efficacy; Nickerson et al., 2014). Qualitative studies can complement this knowledge by amplifying the voices of those students who witness bullying (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). Qualitative research aims to elucidate the perspectives and experiences of individuals or groups, and the conditions in which these perspectives and experiences are situated. In other words, qualitative research explores the *how* and *why* questions associated with human or social phenomena (O'Brien, Harris, Beckman, Reed, & Cook, 2014). This project uses qualitative research to document how individuals make meaning of their everyday experiences in regard to seeing bullying.

Focus groups are helpful for exploring attitudes about sensitive topics and clarifying survey findings. A focus group is a "planned discussion designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment" (Kruger, 1994, p. 6). Focus groups allow participants to provide personal narratives about bullying in a spontaneous setting, which creates an atmosphere conducive to personal and honest disclosure (Morgan, 1996). Compared to interviews, group discussions can facilitate more critical expression and exploration of issues and solutions. Participants who are anxious about talking or hesitant to give negative feedback to an interviewer may benefit from safety in numbers and feel empowered to talk when there is synergy in the group (Lederman, 1983; Morgan, 1997). Symbolic convergence theory, a general communication theory, explains that humans are natural storytellers and make sense of their realities by creating narratives to account for past events (Bormann, 1983). Group cohesion is created when individuals coalesce on shared emotions, meanings, and motives that are communicated during interactions (i.e., fantasy themes; Gossett, 2002).

Participant engagement in long-term focus groups can foster group belonging and cohesiveness, as well as willingness to disclose (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

Using focus groups to assess the efficacy of the BIM will reveal motivational concepts and explanations for interventions not featured in current quantitative research (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). This allows a richer and more comprehensive picture as to why some bystanders come forward to help, whereas others do not. This also reveals a largely untold narrative about students' bullying experiences and challenges of interventions. Because peers play a crucial role in preventing bullying, it is essential to learn what they have to say about the issue. The focus group questions are organized around the five steps in the BIM (Latané & Darley, 1970) to explore students' 1) experiences of seeing bullying, 2) interpretations of bullying as hurtful, 3) motivations to help peers, 4) knowledge of intervention strategies, and 5) perceptions of intervention implementation. The following research questions guide the focus groups:

RQ1: What do students say about witnessing bullying during college?

RQ2: What do students say about interpreting bullying as hurtful?

RQ3: What do students say about motivations for helping bullied peers?

RQ4: What do students say they know about bystander intervention strategies?

RQ5: What do students say about how they would intervene in bullying?

The second goal of this dissertation is to analyze whether participation in long-term focus groups serve as a bullying intervention in and of itself. Some research has explored how research involvement can alter perceptions and behavior. Tracy and Rievera (2010) found that the interactive interview process was a "flicker of transformation" for participants, which led to changed perspectives about workplace

sexual harassment (p. 27). Research on racial attitudes and organizational policy also found that gaining a working knowledge of these issues helped participants adopt new attitudes, learn new scripts, and enact new behaviors (Aberson, 2007; Federico & Sidanius, 2002). The act of simply talking through cognitive and behavioral scripts about bullying, in addition to sharing personal experiences allows participants to form new perspectives as a result of interacting with others who have similar experiences (Kitzinger, 1994). For instance, group discussions can alter bullied students' self-blaming attributions, as well as bystanders' victim-blaming attributions. The very qualitative method used to garner data can thus become a transformative agent for cognitive and behavioral change (Tracy & Rievera, 2010).

Knowledge of motivational underpinnings of bystander responses is needed. In order to prevent responses that avoid, maintain, and encourage bullying, as well as encourage defender behavior, understanding these motives are important. Most people disapprove of bullying (Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004), yet often do not intervene (Atlas & Pepler, 2001). The focus groups allow bystanders to define bullying in their own words, discuss relevant experiences, and identify interventions they have or would engage in. Students will identify contextual and relational circumstances in which they would and would not help. Darley and Latané (1968) state, "If people understand the situational forces that can make them hesitate to intervene, they may better overcome them" (p. 383). When individuals are aware of factors contributing to nonintervention (e.g., bystander effect, attributions), they are more likely to intervene in future emergencies situations (Beaman, Barnes, Klentz, & McQuirk, 1978).

Bullying-prevention efforts have grown on campuses, yet we know little about how student focus groups change awareness and knowledge. Current quantitative data suggest that bystanders' empathy (Nickerson et al., 2014), blame attributions (Desmet et al., 2012), and self-efficacy (Pöyhönen et al., 2012) *predict* interventions, yet these variables are also examined as *outcome* measures for prevention efforts (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). This study quantitatively examines how participating in focus groups with BIM education influence students' knowledge, empathy, attributions, and self-efficacy. Conducting focus groups is a cost-effective approach to bullying prevention. If the focus groups beneficially influence students, this informs strategies for promoting positive campuses, such as education and group-discussion sessions about bullying for incoming freshman. A pre- and post-test design examines the following predictions:

H1: Students in the intervention will score higher for bystander interventions.

H2: Students in the intervention will score higher for empathy for bullied peers.

H3: Students in the intervention will score higher for defender self-efficacy.

H4: Students in the intervention will score lower for victim-blaming attributions.

The last goal of this dissertation is to advance theoretical knowledge about bystander interventions to peer bullying. A national large-scale study (Davis & Nixon, 2010) assessed the effectiveness of 14 bystander responses to in-person bullying reported by previously bullied students. Targets identified the following peer strategies as making things better: spent time with me (54%), talked to me (51%), helped me get away (49%), called me (47%), gave me advice (46%), helped me tell (44%), distracted me (43%), listened to me (41%), reported it (35%), confronted them (29%), asked them to stop (27%), made fun of me (15%), ignored it (14%), and blamed me (12%). Allaying and

supportive behaviors were seen as helpful. Peer confrontation of bullies (whether angry or friendly) was seen doing as much harm as good (Davis & Nixon, 2010).

This dissertation will examine additional intervention responses for both online and offline bullying situations, as reported by college student bystanders. In addition, prior research documents bystander intervention responses rated as helpful or effective, yet it is also important to assess other prominent factors that influence bystander interventions, such as the communicative directness and safeness of responses. Many bystanders remain passive due to fear of harm, retaliation, and loss of social status (Rigby & Johnson, 2005; Thornberg et al., 2012). Some students believe that they need to perform heroic acts, such as confrontation to intervene in bullying and show support (Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). Confrontation, however, is more direct and potentially unsafe for the bystander, given the risk of a counter attack. Therefore, this study asseses evaluations of bystander responses to bullying along three dimensions: 1) *helpful* to *unhelpful*, 2) *safe* to *unsafe*, and 3) *direct* to *indirect*.

Evaluating bystander responses to bullying that vary on the dimensions of helpfulness, safeness, and directness contributes to literature on bystander interventions. Campuses can use these findings to inform students about safe and effective ways to intervene. For instance, getting the bullied peer away from the situation, or providing emotional support after the incident to help reduce distress are relatively helpful and safe strategies (Pöyhönen et al., 2012). This knowledge is especially useful for students who remain passive when observing bullying. The passive onlookers often perceive themselves as unable to change the situation in a desired direction (i.e., they value bullying decreasing, but do not think they can change it; Pöyhönen et al., 2012). There

are many subtle and safe ways via which bystanders can support bullied peers that do not require direct interventions, yet students have not yet identified the helpfulness, safeness, and directness of bystander responses. The last research question assesses these topics:

RQ6: Which bystander strategies are evaluated as helpful, safe, and direct?

Chapter 3: Methods

Procedures

Undergraduate students at the University of Minnesota were invited to participate in a study about witnessing bullying during college. The research study was IRB-approved by the university. Participants were 18 years of age or older and self-identified as having seen bullying among peers during college. This project used mixed methods with focus group interviews (FGIs) and a pre- and post-test survey design, including a treatment and control group.

Treatment group. Participants in the treatment group completed a pre-test survey, four one-hour long FGIs, and a post-test survey. Students were recruited through email announcements sent from instructors, as well as posters around campus. The recruitment information included the study overview, requirements, time commitment, compensation, and enrollment instructions. Interested students signed up to attend the four FGIs and completed a pre-test survey that took about 30 minutes. Then, they participated in a series of four one-hour long FGIs that happened on the same day and time each week for four weeks. The FGIs were held in a university research lab with the same four to six students. Participants' attendance in the FGIs was recorded. If a participant missed one session, they received reduced compensation. If a participant missed two sessions, they were withdrawn from the study without compensation.

The first 10 minutes of the FGIs included introductions and explanations of the ground rules, the next 40 minutes included the protocol questions, and the last 10 minutes included a follow-up survey. The organization of the FGIs was informed by the BIM, starting with questions about how students notice and perceive bullying as a situation in

need of help (Step 1 and 2; Meeting #1), motivations for helping (Step 3; Meeting #2), knowledge of intervention strategies (Step 4; Meeting #3), and intervention decisions (Step 5; Meeting #4). Each session began by explaining the BIM step for that meeting, continued to questions about that step, then ended with relevant education. For instance, the third meeting about intervention knowledge (Step 4) ended with learning the university's bullying policies and reporting protocols. Copies of the student conduct code and online reporting resources were provided to and discussed among participants.

At the end of each session, participants completed a follow-up survey. The survey assessed how participants were feeling, let them privately share anything they did not want to disclose with the group, and asked whether they desired additional resources to manage distress associated with the study. Once participants submitted the follow-up survey, they were debriefed, thanked for their time, reminded about upcoming tasks, and provided with mental health and bullying resources. I reviewed the surveys after each session to assess participant distress. There were several instances when participants wanted a follow-up concerning schedule questions. There were no instances of a participant indicating discomfort due to the study. One week after participants completed the fourth and final session, they were notified to complete the online post-test survey that took roughly 30 minutes. Participants received $50 upon completion of the post-test.

Control group. Participants in the control group only completed the pre- and post-test surveys. Students received extra credit to participate in a one-hour online study about bullying for extra-credit, including a 30-minute pre- and 30-minute post-test. Students were recruited through email announcements from instructors. Participants completed the pre-test and then were instructed to complete a post-test that was emailed

to them five weeks later. Participants had one week to complete the post-test upon receiving the survey via email. The pre- and post-test data assessed differences in students' awareness, knowledge, and attitudes about bullying interventions due to the FGIs. The post-test survey for both the intervention and control groups ended with the measure evaluating the helpfulness, safeness, and directness of bystander intervention responses to bullying. After completing the post-test, participants in the control group received extra credit points for classes.

Participants

The *treatment group* included nine focus groups with four to six participants each for 36 total participants (27 women, 9 men). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 (M = 21 years). Participant classifications of racial and ethnic groups were informed by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010). Participants identified as being White/Caucasian (44%, n = 16), Asian (39%, n = 14), Black/African-American (11%, n = 4), American Indian/Alaskan Native (n = 1, 3%), and other (African: n = 1, 3%). The treatment group included freshmen (17%, n = 6), sophomores (25%, n = 9), juniors (19%, n = 7), and seniors (39%, n = 14).

The *control group* included 115 participants (72 women, 43 men). Their age ranged from 18 to 28 (M = 21 years). Participants identified as White/Caucasian (57%, n = 63), Asian (31%, n = 38), Black/African-American (6%, n = 7), and Hispanic/Latino (6%, n = 7). The control group included freshmen (10%, n = 12), sophomores (20%, n = 24), juniors (37%, n = 40), and seniors (33%, n = 38). The treatment (n = 36) and control groups (n = 115) had an unbalanced number of participants. Given the limited resources of this study, monetary compensation was provided only to those participants in the

intervention (which required 5 hours) compared to the control group participants (which required 1 hour). Thus, the treatment-group participants received monetary compensation and the control-group participants received extra credit in courses.

Measurements

Bullying involvement. Participants completed a short version of the Gatehouse Bullying Scale (Bond, Wolfe, & Tollit, 2007). Participants responded to five Likert-type items (1 = *never* to 5 = *everyday*) to indicate how often they were bullied during college: "Someone has called me names, threatened me, or hurt me with words to my face" (verbal); "Someone has spread rumors, lies, or gossip about me" (denigration); "Someone has left me out of things on purpose" (exclusion); "Someone has physically hurt me" (physical); and "Someone has been mean, hurtful, or threatening to me through the use of technology (computers, cell phones, social media, etc.)." The same five items were reworded to assess experiences as bullies and bystanders. To assess bullying behaviors, participants indicated how often they bullied others during college (e.g., "Made fun of, threatened, or called someone names in a hurtful way with words to their face"). Participants also indicated how often they saw bullying in college (e.g., "I have seen someone being physically hurt"). The measure provided good reliabilities for the target ($\alpha = 0.82$), bully ($\alpha = 0.75$), and bystander ($\alpha = 0.85$) subscales.

Bystander roles. Eight items examined bystander roles (Salmivalli et al., 1996). Participants used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*) to indicate how they responded to bullying seen in college. Two items measured each bystander role, including the assistant (e.g., "I join in with the bullying"), reinforcer (e.g.,

"I watch the bullying"), outsider (e.g., "I stay away from bullying"), and defender (e.g., "I try to stop the bullying"). The measure produced a satisfactory reliability ($\alpha = 0.77$).

Bystander interventions. Nickerson et al. (2014) developed a five-step BIM measure to examine interventions to bullying and sexual harassment. The current study reframed the statements to focus exclusively on bullying. The 16-item measure assessed each BIM step on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Example items include: "Bullying is a problem at this campus" (notice the event); "It is clear to me that someone who is being bullied needs help" (interpret harm); "If I am not the one bullying others, it is still my responsibility to try to stop it" (accept responsibility to help); "I have the skills to support someone who is being treated disrespectfully" (know how to help); and "I would say something to someone who is acting mean or disrespectful to a more vulnerable person" (implement response). The subscales produced the following reliability scores: notice the event ($\alpha = 0.79$), interpret harm ($\alpha = 0.67$), accept responsibility to help ($\alpha = 0.78$), know how to help ($\alpha = 0.76$), and implement decisions ($\alpha = 0.75$). The total scale reliability was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.82$).

Empathy. Empathy was examined using six items created for this research. The items measured how much participants understand with and relate to the emotions of bullied peers on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree)* to 5 (*strongly agree)*. Three items assessed cognitive empathy (i.e., understanding the emotions of others), including "Someone who is bullied suffers," "I am aware of how bullying hurts those involved," and "When I see someone who is upset from being bullied, I understand what they feel." Three items assessed affective empathy (i.e., feeling the emotions of others), including "I feel sorry for those who get bullied," "When I see someone being

bullied, I feel bad for them," and "I get worried and upset when I see someone who needs help in a bullying situation." The scale was piloted in a separate, unrelated study with an acceptable reliability (α = .70). A good reliability was reported for this study (α = .80).

Self-efficacy. Kingston's (2008) Self-efficacy Regarding Peer Intervention Scale measured participants' beliefs in their ability to intervene in bullying. The scale had 10-items (e.g., "I can prevent bullying at my campus"; "If I try to help someone being bullied, the bully will turn on me", reverse coded) rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale produced a satisfactory reliability (α = .72).

Attributions. Attributions were measured with six items assessing the extent to which participants believe that bullied targets are to blame and at fault. Schacter et al. (2016) used the measure to evaluate attributions in cyberbullying. The items were adapted to assess attributions for bullying in general (e.g., "Kate could have prevented this comment from being posted" was changed to "Someone who is bullied could have prevented it"; "Kate should not blame herself for what happened (reverse coded)" was changed to "People who are bullied should not blame themselves for what happened"). Participants responded on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The current study reported a good reliability for the scale (α = .82).

Self-esteem. Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem scale is a commonly used measure of global self-esteem. The scale includes 10-items that measure positive and negative feelings about the self. A four-item short form of the scale was created that highly correlated with the 10-item scale (Tambs & Roysamb, 2014). To minimize respondent burden, the four-item short scale was used for this study. Example items are: "I have a

positive attitude toward myself" and "I feel useless at times" (reverse coded). Items were answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). The measure produced an exceptional reliability (α = .83).

Susceptibility to peer influence. Steinberg and Monahan's (2007) Susceptibility to Peer Influence measure examined the extent to which participants are influenced by their peers during social interactions. Participants rated how true 10 statements were for them ranging from 1 (*not true*) to 5 (*always true*). Example items include: "I agree with my friends just to keep them happy" and "I take more risks when I am with my friends than I do when I am alone." In the current study, this scale demonstrated satisfactory reliability (α = .78)

Attachment. The Relationship Structures Questionnaire assesses adult attachment patterns in close relationships (Fraley, Heffernan, Vicary, & Brumbaugh, 2011). Six items tap avoidance (e.g., "I usually discuss my problems and concerns with others", reverse coded) and three items tap anxiety (e.g., "I often worry that other people do not really care for me"). Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). There were good reliabilities for the avoidance (α = .85) and anxious (α = .85) subscales.

Bystander intervention evaluations. Participants were presented with 28 bystander responses to online and offline bullying at the end of the post-test. They indicated how helpful, safe, and direct they perceived each response. Bystander behaviors reported in prior research (Davis & Nixon, 2010) were used in the evaluations, along with additional responses developed for this research. After reading each behavior, participants responded to three items: 1) "How helpful do you think this bystander

behavior is?", 2) "How safe do you think this bystander behavior is?", and 3) "How direct do you think this bystander behavior is?" The items were rated on a 5-point semantic-differential scale with bipolar adjectives (*hurtful-helpful*, *unsafe-safe*, *indirect-direct)*. Participants read a description of each bipolar adjective before rating, including 1) "**Helpful** = it will stop the bullying and/or make the bullied peer feel better; **Unhelpful** = it will not stop the bullying and/or will make the bullied peer feel worse"; 2) "**Safe** = it will not put yourself in danger; **Unsafe** = it will put yourself in danger"; and 3) "**Direct communication** = you explicitly and clearly communicate your needs and desires to someone, often with verbal messages; **Indirect communication** = you communicate your needs and desires to someone in a round-about, vague, and unclear way, usually with nonverbal messages (Baxter, 1982)."

Qualitative Data

Focus groups. The focus group interviews (FGIs) qualitatively explored students' experiences of bullying. There were nine focus groups each with four to six participants. Each focus group met four times over the course of one month and included the same participants in each weekly meeting. In all, there were 36 total focus group sessions. The organization of the FGIs was informed by the BIM, starting with questions about how students notice bullying, perceive it as hurtful and in need of help (Step 1 and 2, Meeting #1), feel responsible to help (Step 3, Meeting #2), know how to help (Step 4, Meeting #3), and implement intervention decisions (Step 5, Meeting #4).

I strived to make the FGIs comfortable by providing refreshments and snacks, having the group sit in a circle, and starting with an ice-breaker activity. Before asking questions, I reminded the group that their identities would remain confidential and

explained that the goal of the discussion was for everyone to talk to each other rather than continually address myself (e.g., “I will take the back seat”; Powney, 1988). A semi-structured protocol was used, which prepares questions but allows flexibility for the researcher to add or change questions as needed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). This allows for broad categories of interest to be addressed, participants to expand on areas of interest, and additional probing for more detailed information as appropriate (Kitzinger, 1995).

The protocol included main and probing questions. Broad main questions were designed to build a conversational partnership, which facilitates responsive interviewing by encouraging participants to guide the discussion based on their backgrounds and experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). For instance, participants were asked a main inquiry, such as “Describe a bullying situation in which you would not do anything.” An example probing question included, “How does the presence of other bystanders influence your decisions?” This approach allowed flexibility for groups to organically direct the flow of conversation. I applied an interventionist style by bringing up inconsistencies between participants and their perspectives to elucidate why they think the way they do (Kitzinger, 1995). A devils-advocate style was used to address the “what ifs” in different situations.

The FGIs were digitally recorded via an audiotape, transcribed, and anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality. Research assistants transcribed verbatim all digital sound files captured in the focus group recordings. Then, I listened to all the focus group audio recordings and reviewed every transcript to ensure an accurate execution of data collection. During and after the completion of each session, I kept informal notes to document any salient unspoken features of the discussion and notable general themes (Smith, Flower, & Larkin, 2009). I listened to the audio files after each session, took

notes and revisited the protocol to ensure that the next focus group questions were adapted based on salient responses (e.g., barriers to noticing bullying). After reviewing the data and notes in the later stages of data analysis, I identified pertinent topics as possible filters for coding categories (Smith et al., 2009). For instance, there were many cases of participants expressing uncertainty about whether a situation was considered bullying (e.g., exclusion). The ambiguity around what behaviors constitute bullying informed the development of a coding category.

Content analysis. Descriptive content analysis provides contextual meaning in textual data through the development of emergent themes. Those themes that repeat through the coding process provide insight about the data (Bryman, 2001). Content analysis produces core themes through a systematic method of identification, analysis, and reduction. Textual data are coded in established categories that reinforce the generation of ideas. When a similar piece of text or idea is associated with a particular category it is included (Priest, Roberts, & Woods, 2002).

To analyze the transcript data, a deductive-inductive process was used for the development and refinement of coding schemes and interpretation of the data. The first step was reviewing the transcripts through data immersion to become familiar with the content. The data-analysis method began with a directed content analysis, meaning that categories and coding systems were defined before and during data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). For the initial steps of directed content analysis, I coded general themes in the data (i.e., similarities among examples of the phenomenon that seem to be in the same general category; Ragin & Amoroso, 2011) derived from theoretical constructs, such as motivations and knowledge. I used these general themes as first-level categories

(i.e., superordinate themes), then created second-level categories to parse out larger ideas (i.e., subordinate themes; Tracy, 2013). I re-read the transcripts and coded more finely to capture further nuances in the data to develop subordinate concepts. For example, intervention motivations (i.e., first-level category) were further delineated into two second-order categories, namely internal (e.g., morals) and external (e.g., severity) motivations. A codebook was created that identified categories.

During and after deductive coding, if a theme surfaced from the data that did not fit with previously developed codes, then a new code involving that theme was created. For instance, several participants expressed a realization they had about bullying due to the group discussion, such as identifying prior bullying involvement as a target and/or perpetrator. A category named *realization* was developed to reflect this theme. When new ideas emerged, prior transcripts were revisited to ensure the idea was not overlooked. The directed-content-analysis was a retroductive process involving the interplay of deductive and inductive approaches. It is a process characterized by the linking of evidence (induction) to theory (deduction) in a dynamic and evolving process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Ragin & Amoroso, 2011). Retroduction involves formulating or fitting theoretical explanations to observations, and new observations back to explanations.

Reliability. Assessing reliability for in-depth FGIs contains several challenges. There were several codes that were applied to the same section of text, which is common with semi-structured interviews (Campbell, Quincy, Osserman, & Pedersen, 2013). The coding of concepts was simultaneous (Priest et al., 2002), meaning that more than one code could be applied to a single data piece (e.g., one text featuring two codes). Another reliability issue involved the unitization process. This problem occurs when portions of

text to be coded, the units of analysis, are not naturally given (e.g., utterance, sentence), but need the subjective interpretation of a coder (Krippendorff, 1995). Coders can thus unitize the same text differently, as they may disagree on which text segments contain a particular meaning (Kurasaki, 2000). Similar sections of text can be identified as the same code, yet each section varies in length because a coder includes background information about the context, whereas the other does not. This is common in studies in which free responses to open-ended questions are coded (Krippendorff, 1995; Kurasaki, 2000). This study's transcripts ran on for many pages, covered many themes, and were too long to take as a single unit of analysis. Sentences or single paragraphs were often too short to capture the full meaning of what a respondent was saying about a certain theme.

There is debate about whether clearly delineated parts of text, such as a sentence or paragraph, rather than *units of meaning* as defined by the coder are the appropriate units of analysis (Garrison, Cleveland-Innes, Koole, & Kappelman, 2006). The concern with using predefined blocks of text is that it may not accurately reflect the meaning as intended by the respondent. Yet, the concern with using a unit of meaning is that it involves coder subjectivity via which the boundary of any meaning unit depends largely on interpretation (Kurasaki, 2000). In exploratory research with complex interview data, the meaning unit can be the appropriate focus of analysis, because it is less likely to decontextualize what the respondent is saying (Garrison et al., 2006). Many respondents during in-depth semi-structured interviews do not speak in clearly delineated text units. There are more wide-ranging and choppy conversations. Interviewers may ask about a certain topic, but receive responses that include tangents, diversions, backtracks, and overlaps with other themes (Kurasaki, 2000).

I employed a unitization strategy focused on meaning units rather than naturally given units. A codable unit was identified as any portion of text regardless of length to which a meaningful code applied (Campbell et al., 2013). Some units were a sentence, other units were a paragraph, and some units were more than a paragraph with the end and beginning portions of two adjacent paragraphs. In order to generate codeable units for later coding by research assistants, I identified the units of analysis in transcripts by marking a segment of text in the margin with a bracket and then placing the appropriate code in the bracket. Once the text was coded, a copy was resaved that removed the codes but not the brackets. The bracketed version was given to the research assistants who coded the delineated sections. Coders read and coded the same units of text, then compared them to see whether there were coding discrepancies (Krippendorff, 1995).

I unitized the data because this situation requires subjective interpretation, contextualization, and a thorough understanding of the theoretically motivated questions guiding the study. As Krippendorff (1995) noted, the ability to see meaningful conceptual breaks relies on the qualifications and skills of the coder to discern obvious meanings, but also more subtle meanings. Unitizing the text in this way eliminates a source of confusion when comparing the codes of two or more coders, especially when one coder is more knowledgeable than the others (Krippendorff, 1995). One possible concern for this unitization strategy is that it biases intercoder reliability, such as alerting coders when there is something to be coded in the text that they might not have otherwise coded. This was not a particular concern in this study as the main issue that arose from coders was about how much text to bracket for a certain code rather than whether a certain code was

appropriate for the text. Overall, unitizing meaning in semi-structured interview text facilitates a more accurate assessment of intercoder reliability (Campbell et al., 2013).

Analyzing in-depth semi-structured interviews involves a three-stage process (Campbell et al., 2013). The first stage includes developing the coding scheme with an acceptable level of intercoder reliability based on a data sample. Intercoder reliability requires that two or more coders operating in isolation from each other select the same code for the same unit of text (Krippendorff, 2004). The second stage involves adjudicating the remaining coding disagreements with a negotiation among coders in an effort to establish high intercoder agreement, particularly for troublesome codes revealed during intercoder reliability. Intercoder agreement requires that two or more coders can reconcile through discussion the coding discrepancies they have for the same unit of text. Discrepancies can arise due to unequal coder knowledge about the interview subject matter (Garrison et al., 2006). The third stage involves deploying that coding scheme on the full dataset once acceptable levels of intercoder reliability and/or agreement are met.

The formal process of developing the coding scheme began during the mid-point of data collection. The scheme was significantly revised two times and tested by 10 total coders until intercoder agreement (i.e., the degree to which two or more coders match when they code in isolation without negotiation; Campbell et al., 2013) reached an acceptable level. The 10 coders were not involved in the coding at the same time; rather, they were spread across three rounds of coding. Four coders were involved with the first and second review of the codebook each, and two first-time coders were involved in the final reliability check. In every subsequent coding trial, a different full-length transcript was used. In the end, six transcripts were used before the results were satisfactory, which

is roughly 15% of the total data (n = 36). Researchers should continue to sample transcripts and refine codes until they are satisfied with intercoder agreement.

I developed the first version of the scheme with an initial set of a dozen codes informed by theory and emergent themes. Four undergraduate research assistants were recruited to help develop the scheme. Assistants received a detailed overview of the project and formal training on content analysis. All categories were processed in a codebook, which included procedures for handling the data and listed the coding scheme with category names, definitions, coding rules, and examples (Weber, 1990). The scheme was reviewed with the assistants by explaining how it was developed, what the codes were, and what each one meant. A random transcript was selected for the assistants to code separately. The results were compared, revealing complications with the scheme, so the codes were revised. Adjustments like this are common, and involved dropping, merging, or modifying categories (Hruschka et al. 2004; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Another four new research assistants repeated the exercise, revealing minor issues with a few categories. Problems concerning the definitions of categories, coding rules, and categorization of specific cases were discussed and resolved within the group (Schilling, 2006). The codebook was revised to become more precise with definitions and examples where necessary. Another concern that arose during this round of revisions was the confusion regarding the unit of analysis for coding. At this stage, I unitized the transcript into units of meaning (as previously discussed) and had the coders analyze a new transcript. This led to a more acceptable level of agreement (Hruschka et al., 2004).

For the third and final round of reliability coding, two new research assistants repeated the process. The coders examined roughly 10% of the data (one transcript from

each of the four meetings, four transcripts total) to determine inter-rater reliability (IRR), which ensures consensus and confirmation of the categories developed. Following Miles and Huberman (1984) to determine the level of IRR for a code, the number of times that all coders used it in the same text unit was divided by the number of times that any coder used it in the transcript. IRR is based on simple percent agreement: the number of agreements between independent coders divided by the number of possible agreements. For instance, if 20 units had been coded ‘‘motivation” by at least one coder and in 15 of those cases all coders invoked the code on the same text unit, then the level of IRR would be 75% for the ‘‘motivation’’ code. Achieving an IRR of 80% to 90% is satisfactory (Miles & Huberman, 1984). The following IRR scores were reported for each category: college bullying = 89%, hurtful = 66%, cues = 75%, uncertainty = 75%, motivation = 87%, strategy = 89%, knowledge = 80%, and realization = 75%.

The hurtful category was the only code to report a low IRR of 66%. Using the negotiated agreement method raised it to 84%. This was the only category for which negotiated agreement occurred, which is still advantageous in exploratory research. In addition, the overall IRR for all codes were calculated as a set by dividing the total number of agreements for all codes by the total number of agreements and disagreements for all codes combined. This resulted in an acceptable IRR of 86%. The approach was an iterative process of coding a sample of text, checking coder agreement, and revising the scheme. If the agreement did not reach an acceptable level, the scheme was revised.

Although it is not usually recommended to calculate intercoder reliability by simple percentage of agreement among coders, it was the most appropriate choice for this study. A simple percentage agreement does not consider the potential that coders agree

by chance. Chance can inflate agreement percentages, especially with only two coders and when they have only a few codes (Grayson & Rust, 2001). Thus, more complicated statistics are often used for determining intercoder reliability (e.g., Krippendorff's alpha coefficient; Krippendorff, 2004). However, the assumptions for most complicated intercoder reliability statistics are not met by this study. First, not all codes had an equal probability of being used (e.g., the "motivation" code appeared in nearly all transcripts across the four focus groups, whereas the "bullying cues" code largely surfaced in the first focus group when probed about the topic). Second, the three coders did not have the same qualifications (i.e., the PI was more knowledgeable about the subject matter than the research assistants). Third, there was a larger number of codes (n = 8), which decreases the likelihood that coders agree by chance (Grayson & Rust, 2001). There were also multiple codes applied to a unit of text, which creates issues for some reliability statistics (Campbell et al., 2013). Last, given that this was an exploratory research study, using a simple proportion agreement method is more acceptable (Kurasaki, 2000).

After sufficient reliability was achieved with the primary codes, I applied the primary coding rules to the entire corpus of text. Then, I returned to the coded transcripts and coded relevant categories again with a more detailed set of secondary codes, which were often generated with a more inductive than deductive approach. This coding requires a high degree of knowledge. Albeit, it is still necessary to check how reliable the secondary coding was. The credibility of the research findings was verified by the fact that all categories were mentioned by more than one respondent and in more than one scenario. Using multiple focus groups allows researchers to assess the extent to which saturation has been reached (Flick, 1998). Saturation occurred when the concepts were

fully developed to anticipate and fit any future data collected (Sandelowski, 2008). The themes became increasingly redundant that the collection of more data appeared to have no additional interpretive worth (Saumure & Given, 2008).

Credibility was established through member checking at various stages. Insight gathered through member checking was considered and integrated into future data collection and analysis processes (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). First, the interview questions were discussed with participants in the first focus group at the end of each session. I also fed ideas back to participants during interviews to clarify, rephrase, and interpret. Moreover, I randomly contacted five participants to see whether they were willing to provide feedback on a summary of the results. The process of returning the analysis summary to those who were interviewed affirms the representativeness of the data. Member checks provide an opportunity for informants to share whether or not they can find their voice in the synthesized data (Goldblatt, Karnieli-Miller, & Newumann, 2011).

Three informants agreed with the analysis summary of bullying and bystander intervention characteristics. Two informants suggested additions to and clarifications of the results. For instance, the initial analysis summary presented interventions as inhibited for online bullying, yet an informant felt the opposite and did not find their perspective in the summary. Although most participants were less inclined to intervene online (n = 12, 33%), a few were more inclined (n = 4, 11%). Online interventions enabled greater self-efficacy for some bystanders, a finding that was initially overlooked and included in the results. Another informant reinforced the importance of ethics when videotaping bullying incidents. As such, the results present appropriate circumstances under which videotaping

bullying incidents was described as a helpful response from bystanders. Overall, informants affirmed the representativeness of the data. Participant quotes are provided in the results section that reflect emergent themes from the synthesized data.

Chapter 4: Results

This section starts with the quantitative results, including descriptive statistics about the participants, followed by the pre- and post-test intervention findings, and then the evaluations of 28 bystander responses to bullying. Last, the qualitative results from the focus group are presented and organized by the BIM five-step process.

Quantitative Data

Descriptive statistics. Participants reported their experiences being bullied, bullying others, and witnessing bullying during college. Of the participants, 76% (*n* = 115) were bullied during college compared to 24% (*n* = 36) who were not. Of those who were bullied, 72% (*n* = 109) had rumors, lies, or gossip spread about them, 71% (*n* = 107) were excluded, 67% (*n* = 101) were verbally bullied, 34% (*n* = 51) were cyberbullied, and 24% (*n* = 36) were physically bullied. Of the participants, 56% (*n* = 84) bullied others during college compared to 44% (*n* = 67) who did not. Of those who bullied others, 54% (*n* = 82) excluded others, 52% (*n* = 79) spread rumors, lies, or gossip about others, 40% (*n* = 61) verbally bullied, 25% (*n* = 38) cyberbullied, and 9% (*n* = 13) physically bullied.

In order to participate in the study, students must have seen bullying among peers during college. Participants reported witnessing the following types of bullying: 90% (*n* = 136) observed someone spreading rumors, lies, or gossip, 85% (*n* = 128) saw exclusion, 78% (*n* = 118) saw verbal, 74% (*n* = 111) observed cyberbullying, and 39% (*n* = 59) saw physical bullying. Participants reported seeing bullying in the following locations: outside campus areas (34%, *n* = 51), parties/social events (32%, *n* = 49), bars/restaurants (26%, *n* = 40), University events (23%, *n* = 34), home/dorms (21%, *n* = 32), classrooms

(21%, *n* = 32), on/waiting for the bus (19%, *n* = 28), club organizations/meetings (15%, *n* = 22), hallways (14%, *n* = 21), and athletic practice/games (14%, *n* = 21; see Table 1).

During preliminary analyses, gender (male/female), experiences being bullied (yes/no) and bullying others (yes/no), self-esteem, susceptibility to peer influence, and attachment style were entered as covariates in all analyses. No covariates generated significant interaction effects and were omitted as covariates in all future analyses. These variables were however used for exploratory analyses with the pre-test measures below.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine whether empathy was different at the pre-test for those who had versus had not previously been bullied while in college. Participants were classified into two groups: "was bullied" and "was not bullied". Those who were previously bullied in college had significantly higher empathy scores ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.56$) at the pre-test compared to those who had not been bullied ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 0.60$), a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.23$, 95% CI [-0.001, 0.47], $t(149) = 1.92$, $p = .05$, $d = .57$. An additional independent-samples t-test was run to assess differences at the pre-test in bystander roles for those who were previously bullied during college. Those who were previously bullied had significantly higher defender scores ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.01$) than those who had not been bullied ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 1.08$), a statistically significant difference, $M = 0.69$, 95% CI [0.26, 1.12], $t(149) = 3.20$, $p < .05$, $d = 1.03$. Moreover, those who previously bullied others during college were more likely to adopt a pro-bully bystander role (i.e., supporter, reinforcer). Participants were classified into two groups: "bullied others" and "had not bullied others". Those who previously bullied others had significantly higher pro-bully scores ($M = 1.40$, $SD = 0.37$) compared to those who had not ($M = 1.15$, $SD = 0.22$), a statistically significant

difference, $M = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.10, 0.32], $t(149) = 3.72$, $p < .001$, $d = .33$. Prior bullying experiences clearly influenced bystander roles for bullying. Previously bullied bystanders were more likely to implement defender roles, whereas bystanders who previously bullied others were more likely to implement pro-bully roles.

A Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relation between bystander roles and susceptibility to peer influence. An increase in the pro-bully bystander role had a small association with an increase in susceptibility to peer influence, $r(149) = 0.21$, $p < .05$, with the pro-bully role explaining 5% of the variation in peer influence. Additionally, the defender bystander role was negatively correlated with susceptibility to peer influence, $r(149) = -0.18$, $p < .05$, with the defender role explaining 4% of the variation in peer influence. Last, a Pearson's product-moment correlation was run to assess the relation between attachment styles and susceptibility to peer influence. An anxious attachment style was positively correlated with susceptibility to peer influence, $r(149) = .35$, $p < .0001$, with the anxious style explaining 12% of the variation in peer influence. These data suggest that students susceptible to peer influence were more likely to adopt pro-bully bystander roles and to have an anxious attachment style.

Bystander intervention. H1 predicted that students who participated in the focus group intervention would report higher bullying bystander-intervention scores, as assessed by the BIM measure. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the treatment on post-test bystander-intervention in bullying scores after controlling for pre-test bystander-intervention in bullying scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV ($n_{yes} = 36$; $n_{no} = 115$), pre-test bystander-intervention in bullying scores as the covariate, and post-test bystander-intervention in bullying scores as the DV. There

was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .526). Pre-test bystander-intervention in bullying was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 79.52$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .35$. After adjustment for pre-test scores, there was a statistically significant between-group difference in post-test bullying bystander-intervention scores, $F(1,148) = 27.09$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .16$, with a mean difference of 0.403 mmol/L, 95% CI [0.250, 0.556], $p < .001$. Using adjusted means, post-test bystander-intervention in bullying scores were significantly greater in the treatment group (M = 4.15, SE = 0.07) compared to the control group (M = 3.75, SE = 0.04; see Table 2). Thus, H1 was supported.

Manipulation checks. Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to discern if the intervention produced statistically significant differences for each of the individual five-steps in the BIM. The goal of these additional analyses was to illustrate whether the focus group meetings actually tapped each of the BIM steps, in addition to the overall BIM score noted above.

BIM step 1: Notice bullying. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the treatment on post-intervention noticing-bullying scores after controlling for pre-intervention noticing-bullying scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV (n_{yes} = 36; n_{no} = 115), pre-intervention noticing bullying scores as the covariate, and post-intervention noticing bullying scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .515). Pre-intervention noticing bullying was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 67.42$, $p < .001$, η_p = .31. After adjustment for pre-intervention noticing-bullying scores, there was a statistically significant between-group difference in post-intervention noticing-bullying

scores, F(1,148) = 73.11, p < .001, partial η^2 = .33, with a mean difference of 1.13 mmol/L, 95% CI [0.867, 1.388], $p < .001$. Using adjusted means, post-intervention noticing bullying scores were significantly greater in the treatment group ($M = 3.96$, $SE = 0.11$) compared to the control group ($M = 2.83$, $SE = 0.06$; see Table 2). Therefore, the intervention tapped Step 1 of the BIM, namely noticing and recognizing bullying.

BIM step 2: Interpret harm. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the treatment on post-intervention interpreting-harm scores after controlling for pre-intervention interpreting-harm scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV ($n_{yes} = 36$; $n_{no} = 115$), pre-intervention interpreting-harm scores as the covariate, and post-intervention interpreting-harm scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance ($p = .223$). Pre-intervention interpreting harm was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 38.69$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .21$. The F-test for post-test interpreting-harm scores (controlling for the pre-test) was significant, $F(1,148) = 16.72$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .10$, with a mean difference of 0.40 mmol/L, 95% CI [0.205, 0.589], $p < .001$. Using adjusted means, post-intervention interpreting-harm scores were statistically significantly greater in the treatment group ($M = 4.75$, $SE = 0.08$) compared to the control group ($M = 4.35$, $SE = 0.05$; see Table 2). The intervention was effective at tapping Step 2 of the BIM: Interpreting harm and need for help.

BIM step 3: Motivation to help. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the treatment on post-intervention motivation-to-help scores after controlling for pre-intervention motivation scores. A categorical treatment variable was used as the IV ($n_{yes} = 36$; $n_{no} = 115$), pre-intervention motivation scores as the covariate, and post-intervention motivation scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as

assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .321). Pre-intervention motivation to help was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 58.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .28$. After adjustment for pre-intervention motivation scores, there was a statistically significant between-group difference in post-intervention motivation-to-help scores, F(1, 148) = 4.44, p < .05, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, with a mean difference of 0.24 mmol/L, 95% CI [0.015, 0.463], $p < .05$. Using adjusted means, post-intervention motivation-to-help scores were significantly greater in the treatment group ($M = 4.10$, $SE = 0.10$) compared to the control group ($M = 3.86$, $SE = 0.05$; see Table 2). Therefore, the treatment tapped Step 3 of the BIM, namely motivation to intervene.

BIM step 4: Knowledge of strategies. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the intervention on post-intervention bystander-knowledge scores after controlling for pre-intervention knowledge scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV ($n_{yes} = 36$; $n_{no} = 115$), pre-intervention knowledge scores as the covariate, and post-intervention knowledge scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .685). Pre-intervention bystander knowledge was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 96.91$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .40$. The F-test for post-test intervention knowledge scores (controlling for the pre-test) was also significant, $F(1,148) = 22.51$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .13$, with a mean difference of 0.54 mmol/L, 95% CI [0.318, 0.771], $p < .001$. Using adjusted means, post-intervention bystander-knowledge scores were statistically significantly greater in the treatment group ($M = 4.08$, $SE = 0.10$) compared to the control group ($M = 3.54$, $SE = 0.06$; see Table 2). The intervention effectively tapped Step 4 of the BIM (knowledge of strategies).

BIM step 5: Intention to intervene. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the intervention on post-intervention intent to intervene scores after controlling for pre-intervention intention scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV (n_{yes} = 36; n_{no} = 115), pre-intervention intent-to-help scores as the covariate, and post-intervention intent-to-help scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .497). Pre-intervention intent to help was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 60.10$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .29$. After adjustment for pre-intervention intent scores, there was a statistically significant between-group difference in post-intervention intent-to-help scores, $F(1,148) = 6.22$, $p < .05$, partial η^2 = .04, with a mean difference of 0.27 mmol/L, 95% CI [0.055, 0.478], $p < .001$. Using adjusted means, post-intervention intent to help scores were significantly greater in the treatment group (M = 4.21, SE = 0.09) compared to the control group (M = 3.95, SE = 0.05; see Table 2). The treatment effectively tapped Step 5 of the BIM: Intention to intervene.

Empathy. H2 predicted that students who participated in the focus group intervention would report more empathy for bullied peers. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the treatment on post-intervention empathy scores after controlling for pre-intervention empathy scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV (n_{yes} = 36; n_{no} = 115), pre-intervention empathy scores as the covariate, and post-intervention empathy scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .405). Pre-intervention empathy was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 46.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .24$. However, the F-test for post-test intervention empathy scores (controlling for the pre-test) was not

significant, $F(1,148) = 0.02$, $p > .05$, $\eta_p < .001$. Using adjusted means, post-intervention empathy scores were not significantly greater in the treatment group ($M = 4.36$, $SE = 0.08$) compared to the control group ($M = 4.38$, $SE = 0.05$; see Table 2). Therefore, H2 was not supported.

Self-efficacy. H3 predicted that students who participated in the focus group intervention would score higher in defender self-efficacy scores. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the intervention on post-intervention self-efficacy scores after controlling for pre-intervention self-efficacy scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV ($n_{yes} = 36$; $n_{no} = 115$), pre-intervention self-efficacy scores as the covariate, and post-intervention self-efficacy scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance ($p = .720$). Pre-intervention self-efficacy was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 131.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .47$. However, the F-test for post-test intervention self-efficacy scores (controlling for the pre-test) was not significant, $F(1,148) = 0.07$, $p > .05$, $\eta_p < .001$. After adjustment for pre-intervention self-efficacy scores, treatment ($M = 3.51$, $SE = 0.06$) and control groups ($M = 3.49$, $SE = 0.04$; see Table 2) did not differ significantly in post-intervention self-efficacy scores. Thus, H3 was not supported.

Blame attributions. H4 predicted that students who participated in the focus group intervention would blame bullied targets less than would those in the control group. An ANCOVA was run to determine the effect of the intervention on post-intervention blame-attribution scores after controlling for pre-intervention blame-attribution scores. A categorical intervention variable was used as the IV ($n_{yes} = 36$; $n_{no} = 115$), pre-intervention blame-attribution scores as the covariate, and post-intervention

blame-attribution scores as the DV. There was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance (p = .083). Pre-intervention blame attributions was a significant covariate, $F(1,148) = 150.76$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p = .51$. However, the F-test for post-test intervention blame attributions scores (controlling for the pre-test) was not significant, $F(1,148) = 0.01$, $p > .05$, $\eta_p < .001$. After adjustment for pre-intervention blame-attribution scores, the treatment (M = 1.81, SE = 0.08) and control groups (M = 1.80, SE = 0.04; see Table 2) did not differ significantly on post-intervention attribution scores. H4 was not supported. Overall, H1 was supported, whereas H2-H4 were not supported. The intervention improved participant scores for the five-step BIM process.

Bystander strategy evaluations. Participants rated 28 bystander intervention strategies to bullying along three dimensions: 1) helpful to unhelpful, 2) safe to unsafe, and 3) direct to indirect. The results below present mean ratings followed by principal components analyses for each dimension.

Helpful vs unhelpful. Mean scores are used to interpret the helpfulness evaluations of the bystander intervention strategies. Helpful scores were normally distributed with a skewness of -0.292 (SE = 0.197) and kurtosis of 0.744 (SE = 0.392). The Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$) and visual inspections of the histogram and Q-Q Plot also revealed normally distributed helpfulness scores. The mean score for helpful ratings of the bystander strategies was 3.25 (SD = 0.42). Those strategies rated above the mean were considered helpful, whereas those strategies rated below the mean were considered unhelpful. The following five strategies were rated as most helpful to intervene in bullying: Help the bullied peer get away from the situation (M = 4.50, SD = 0.73); Walk with the bullied peer to class, the bus, or home (M = 4.41, SD = 0.83); Ask the bullied

peer if they need anything from you (M = 4.41, SD = 0.97); Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the bullied peer (M = 4.33, SD = 0.90); and If help is on the way, film the bullying incident to offer the target for evidence afterward (M = 4.33, SD = 0.90). The five strategies rated as most helpful fall under the defender bystander role. Helping the target escape the situation, manage distressing emotions, and document the incident were viewed as effective bystander intervention strategies to peer bullying.

Participants also rated several strategies as ineffective. The following five strategies were rated as least helpful to intervene in bullying: Join in with the bullying (spread rumors/gossip, laugh at/cheer it on; M = 1.15, SD = 0.56); Blame the bullied peer for being targeted (M = 1.24, SD = 0.66); Do nothing (M = 1.28, SD = 0.77); Make fun of the bullied peer (M = 1.28, SD = 0.73); and Like, support, or forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.; M = 1.36, SD = 0.90). The five strategies rated as least helpful fall under the pro-bully bystander roles, namely reinforcing or promoting the bullying. See Table 3 to review helpful ratings for all 28 bystander strategies.

In addition, a principal components analysis (PCA) was run on the 28-item questionnaire that measured the helpfulness of bystander intervention strategies (n = 151). The suitability of PCA was assessed prior to analysis. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed that all variables had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.78 with individual KMO measures all greater than 0.70, except for four individual KMO measures between 0.60 - 0.69. These are classifications of “middling” to “meritorious” according to Kaiser (1974), which are satisfactory. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant (p < .0005), indicating that the data were appropriate for factor analysis.

The PCA revealed five components that had eigenvalues greater than one and explained 24.1%, 14.9%, 8.4%, 6.5%, and 5.1% of the total variance, respectively. However, visual inspection of the scree plot indicated that two components should be retained (Cattell, 1966). In addition, and most important, a two-component solution met the interpretability criterion with 22 of the items from the measure. The two-component solution explained 39% of the total variance. A Varimax orthogonal rotation was employed to aid interpretability. The rotated solution exhibited "simple structure" (Thurstone, 1947). The interpretation of the data was consistent with the two attributes the questionnaire was designed to measure, with strong loadings of Component 1 (*helpful*) and Component 2 (*unhelpful*). Component loadings and communalities of the rotated solution are presented in Table 4.

There were 15 items that loaded on Component 1 (*helpful*). The following items represent bystander strategies rated as helpful: Call or text the bullied peer to offer support; Send the bullied peer an online supportive message (social media, email, IM, etc.); Report cyberbullying to the site where it occurred; Ask the bullied peer if they need your help reporting and helping tell; Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you; Friend or add the bullied peer to your online accounts; Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.); Unfriend or delete the bully from your online accounts; Not join in with the bullying (not spread rumors/gossip, not laugh at/cheer it on); Tell the bullied peer that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it; Report the bullying to campus officials; Get others to stop watching and move away from the bullying situation; Spend time with and include the bullied peer; Confront the bully and tell them to stop; and Distract the bully during the situation. The strategies

viewed as helpful were largely target-focused (e.g., social support, inclusion) and situation-focused (e.g., de-escalation, distance the target from the bully). Only two strategies (the lowest sized items) were bully-focused, namely confrontation and distraction. Strategies evaluated as helpful were mostly focused on improving the target's well-being, and removing the target from and de-escalating the situation

There were 7 items that loaded on Component 2 (*unhelpful*). The following items represent strategies rated as unhelpful: Join in with the bullying (spread rumors/gossip, laugh at/cheer it on); Ignore the bullying situation ("it is none of my business"); Do nothing; Blame the bullied peer for being targeted; Like, support, or forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.); Make fun of the bullied peer; and Get others to watch the bullying situation. The bystander strategies evaluated as unhelpful were pro-bully responses focused on participating in the aggression (e.g., make fun of or blame the target), escalating the situation (e.g., spread lies), and avoidance (e.g., do nothing).

Safe vs unsafe. Mean scores are used to interpret the safeness evaluations of the bystander intervention strategies. Safety scores were normally distributed with a skewness of -0.235 (SE = 0.197) and kurtosis of 0.109 (SE = 0.392). The Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$) and visual inspections of the histogram and Q-Q Plot also revealed normally distributed safety scores. The mean score for safety ratings of the bystander strategies was 3.59 (SD = 0.50). Those strategies rated above the mean were considered safe, whereas those strategies rated below the mean were considered unsafe. The following five strategies were rated as most safe to intervene in bullying: Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the bullied peer (M = 4.48, SD = 0.86); Tell the bullied peer that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it (M = 4.46, SD = 0.89); Ask the bullied peer if

they need anything from you (M = 4.34, SD = 0.92); Help problem solve with the bullied peer and give them advice about what to do (M = 4.32, SD = 0.87); and Ask the bullied peer if they need your help reporting and helping tell (M = 4.30, SD = 0.95). The five bystander intervention strategies rated as most safe were focused on the provision of social support to the bullied target after the incident.

Participants also rated several strategies as unsafe. The following five strategies were rated as most unsafe to intervene in bullying: Make fun of the bullied peer (M = 2.08, SD = 1.36); Blame the bullied peer for being targeted (M = 2.13, SD = 1.41); Join in with the bullying (spread rumors/gossip, laugh at/cheer it on) (M = 2.39, SD = 1.53); Get others to watch the bullying situation (M = 2.58, SD = 1.34); and Like, support, or forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.) (M = 2.68, SD = 1.38). The five strategies rated as most unsafe associate with the pro-bully bystander role. The bystander could be at risk of retaliation by the target, bully, or other bystanders for getting involved or joining in. See Table 5 for safety ratings of all 28 bystander strategies.

In addition, a principal components analysis (PCA) was run on the 28-item survey that measured the safeness of bystander intervention strategies (n = 151). The suitability of PCA was assessed prior to analysis. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed that all variables had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.82 with individual KMO measures all greater than 0.70, except for one individual KMO measure of 0.66. These are acceptable classifications (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .0005$), indicating that the data were likely appropriate for factor analysis.

The PCA revealed four components with eigenvalues greater than one, which explained 29.8%, 17.5%, 8.9%, and 5.7% of the total variance, respectively. Yet, a visual inspection of the scree plot indicated that two components should be retained (Cattell, 1966). A two-component solution also met the interpretability criterion with 21 items. The two-component solution explained 47.3% of the total variance. A Varimax orthogonal rotation was employed to aid interpretability, which exhibited "simple structure" (Thurstone, 1947). The interpretation of the data was consistent with the two attributes the questionnaire was designed to measure, with strong loadings of Component 1 (*safe*) and Component 2 (*unsafe*). Component loadings and communalities of the rotated solution are presented in Table 6.

There were 14 items that loaded on Component 1 (*safe*). The following items represent bystander strategies rated as safe: Tell the bullied peer that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it; Call or text the bullied peer to offer support; Send the bullied peer an online supportive message (social media, email, IM, etc.); Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the bullied peer; Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you; Ask the bullied peer if they need your help reporting and helping tell; Help problem solve with the bullied peer and offer advice about what to do; Friend or add the bullied peer to your online accounts; Report the cyberbullying to the site where it occurred; Report the bullying to campus officials; Spend time with and include the bullied peer; Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.); Unfriend or delete the bully from your online accounts; and Get others to stop watching and move away from the bullying situation. The responses deemed as safe for bystanders included target-focused strategies, such as the provision of social support and inclusion.

There were 7 items that loaded on Component 2 (*unsafe*). The following items represent bystander strategies rated as unsafe: Join in with the bullying (spread rumors/gossip, laugh at/cheer it on); Like, support, or forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.); Ignore the bullying situation ("it is none of my business"); Do nothing; Get others to watch the bullying situation; Blame the bullied peer for being targeted; and Make fun of the bullied peer. Responses seen as unsafe for the bystander involved pro-bully strategies, such as joining in with the attacks and escalating the situation. This could risk retaliation from the bully, target, or other observers.

Direct vs indirect. Mean scores are used to interpret the directness evaluations of the bystander intervention strategies. Directness scores were normally distributed with a skewness of -0.298 (SE = 0.197) and kurtosis of -0.020 (SE = 0.392). The Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$) and visual inspections of the histogram and Q-Q Plot also revealed normally distributed directness scores. The mean score for directness ratings of the bystander strategies was 3.30 (SD = 0.45). Those strategies rated above the mean were considered direct, whereas those strategies rated below the mean were considered indirect. The following five strategies were rated as most direct to intervene in bullying: Help problem solve with the bullied peer and offer advice about what to do (M = 4.32, SD = 0.92); Confront the bully and tell them to stop (M = 4.28, SD = 0.99); Stand up for the bullied peer during the situation (M = 4.25, SD = 0.91); Tell the bullied peer that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it (M = 4.22, SD = 1.08); and Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you (M = 4.17, SD = 1.07). The five strategies rated as most direct were all verbal communication strategies focused on offering social support to the target or confrontation with the bully.

Participants rated several strategies as indirect. The following five strategies were rated as most indirect to intervene in bullying: Do nothing (M = 1.58, SD = 1.07); Ignore the bullying situation ("it is none of my business"; M = 1.58, SD = 0.98); Like, support, or forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.; M = 2.25, SD = 1.35); Get others to watch the bullying situation (M = 2.34, SD = 1.28); and Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.; M = 2.51, SD = 1.38). The five strategies rated as most indirect were passive, nonverbal bystander behaviors that reinforce or avoid online and offline bullying situations. See Table 7 to review directness ratings for all 28 bystander strategies.

A principal components analysis (PCA) was run on the 28-item questionnaire that measured the directness of bystander intervention strategies (n = 151). The suitability of PCA was assessed prior to analysis. Inspection of the correlation matrix showed that all variables had at least one correlation coefficient greater than 0.3. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure was 0.72 with individual KMO measures all greater than 0.70, except for five individual KMO measure of 0.60 - 0.69. These are satisfactory classifications (Kaiser, 1974). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ($p < .0005$), indicating that the data were likely appropriate for factor analysis.

The PCA revealed four components that had eigenvalues greater than one and explained 23.0%, 20.2%, 13.6%, and 7.3% of the total variance, respectively. However, a visual inspection of the scree plot indicated that three components should be retained (Cattell, 1966). Also, a three-component solution met the interpretability criterion with 15 of the items. The three-component solution explained 56.8% of the total variance. A Varimax orthogonal rotation was employed to aid interpretability. The rotated solution

exhibited “simple structure” (Thurstone, 1947). Although the current study expected a two-component solution (i.e., direct, indirect), a three-component solution emerged. Upon further investigation, there were three attributes the questionnaire measured with strong loadings of Component 1 (*direct target support*), Component 2 (*direct bully support*), and Component 3 (*indirect support*). Component loadings and communalities of the rotated solution are presented in Table 8.

There were 7 items that loaded on Component 1 (*direct target support*). The following items represent bystander intervention strategies rated as directly supporting the target: Tell the bullied peer that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it; Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the bullied peer; Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you; Help problem solve with the bullied peer and offer advice about what to do; Ask the bullied peer if they need your help reporting and helping tell; Help the bullied peer get away from the situation; and Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you. These direct strategies involved verbally supporting the target and removing them from the situation.

There were 4 items that loaded on Component 2 (*direct bully support*). The following items represent strategies rated as directly focused on supporting the bullying situation: Blame the bullied peer for being targeted; Make fun of the bullied peer; Join in with the bullying (spread rumors/gossip, laugh at/cheer it on); and Get others to watch the bullying situation. These strategies were focused on directly supporting the bullying and escalating the situation.

There were 4 items that loaded on Component 3 (*indirect support*). The following items represent bystander strategies rated as indirect: Unfriend or delete the bully from

your online accounts; Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying (comments, posts, images, etc.); Friend or add the bullied peer to your online accounts; and Not join in with the bullying (not spread rumors/gossip, not laugh at/not cheer it on). Indirect responses were nonverbal behaviors aimed at not participating in or de-escalating the bullying situation, and social inclusion with the target.

Qualitative Data

Five research questions explored students' experiences and perspectives for each step in the bystander intervention model (BIM). Findings for the BIM steps are presented below using primary categories to illustrate more general themes and secondary categories to identify more specific ideas. Frequency statistics are used to illustrate how many participants agreed with each category. Representative participant quotes are incorporated in the results to elucidate key findings.

BIM step 1: Notice bullying. The first research question from the focus groups asked, "What do students say about witnessing bullying during college?" Two primary categories were developed to illustrate how students notice bullying, namely *Bullying Cues* and *College Bullying 101*.

Bullying cues. Peer bystanders noticed various cues that were indictive of bullying. Five more specific, secondary categories emerged that elucidate the cues used to recognize bullying. In order to notice bullying, bystanders attended to the following cues: expression of hurt feelings (n = 27, 75%), observation of power imbalance (n = 25, 69%), exhibition of aggressive behaviors (n = 20, 56%), intention to harm (n = 20, 56%), and repetitiveness or severity of behaviors (n = 14, 39%; see Table 9).

Expression of hurt feelings. First, bystanders identified the target's expression of hurt feelings (n = 27, 75%) as a cue to recognize bullying. Respondents noted two nonverbal communication cues that indicate hurt feelings, namely the target expressing negative emotions (n = 21, 58%) and exhibiting closed-off body language (n = 11, 31%). One female participant (Caucasian, 18) explained, "If you see the person you think is bullied, watch their body action, posture and facial expressions." A male participant (Asian, 19) elaborated, "Yeah, head tilted down, sad face, more closed off, and shoulders are crossed off." Although assessing the intent behind aggression was challenging to identify for some bystanders, noticing the reaction expressed by the target helped elucidate whether it was bullying. A female respondent (Asian, 24) said, "It's the body language and face of the person who anything is directed at, because it has to do with intent and outcomes. You can't tell until you see the reaction of the person being targeted." Bystanders attended to targets' nonverbal cues to recognize bullying behaviors.

Bystanders noted that they particularly look for nonverbal indicators of distress to discern bullying. A female respondent (Caucasian, 18) indicated, "You can tell on someone's face if they're uncomfortable, like visually bummed, stressed, or distraught." Bystanders assessed the target's expression to discern bullying, as well as the bullies' and other bystanders' expressions. A male student (Caucasian, 21) said,

> The story earlier about the person with a speech impediment, there's people with an expression on their face reacting to how she speaks. Then also negative reactions that are nonverbal from people who realize people in the room are mocking or making fun of her. You see expressions that show displeasure, like an unspoken understanding that something bad is happening.

Noticing nonverbal cues from all parties involved in the situation signified bullying.

The last indicators of noticing hurt feelings were relevant for bystanders with a close relationship to the target. Some respondents deciphered fake emotions and behaviors expressed by close others, which indicated potential bullying (*n* = 8, 22%). A female respondent (Caucasian, 20) stated, "I've seen when the person goes along with bullying because they don't want more attention or to make things worse. But I notice that vulnerability, how they let it happen, fake laughing with it, but you can tell they are hurting." Another female student (Caucasian, 22) explained, "Look at their gestures or body language and maybe they're laughing but you can tell when they are sad or mad because you know them." It was easier for bystanders to notice bullying among friends.

Bystanders also recognized bullying when close others distanced themselves from the relationship (*n* = 8, 22%). A female participant (Caucasian, 22) reflected, "If someone you're close to backs away from the friendship, maybe not talking as much because they're sad and don't know how to reach out to someone. It's nonverbal, like distancing themselves because they're upset." Another female participant (Caucasian, 19) said, "If they become reserved or isolated, that's noticeable. Or you can tell if you know the person by the way they laugh, like fake laughing to go along with whatever's happening but you know it hurts inside." Last, if a target requested help from the bystander (*n* = 5, 14%), that propelled recognition of bullying. A female participant (Asian, 22) noted, "Sometimes you find them crying. Other times they seek your help and confide in you. It's clear they are upset." The expression of hurt feelings by a target indicated bullying.

Observation of power imbalance. Bystanders noticed the power imbalance among those involved in a situation to discern bullying (*n* = 25, 69%). Two specific categories

emerged in regard to observing power imbalances, namely the target's inability to defend themselves (*n* = 18, 50%) and the perpetrator's physical or group size (*n* = 11, 31%). Students mentioned there being an inequitable power relationship in bullying, leaving the target vulnerable. One female student (Asian, 22) said, "Bullying involves trying to force or compel them to do something they do not wish to do. The bully has some power which makes them give in and comply." A few students discerned from body language whether there was a power imbalance in a situation. A male participant (Caucasian, 19) shared, "I see if one person is asserting dominance over another. The target is frowning, head down, and can't stand up for themselves." One female participant (African-American, 18) conveyed, "I look at the person receiving the message. Sometimes things are all fun and jokes until someone's facial expression and body language change to looking hurt. I see who has more power over the other based on being closed off." A perceived power imbalance was a common indicator of bullying.

Bystanders also suggested that the perpetrator's physical size or group size were indicators of bullying (*n* = 11, 31%). One male participant (Asian, 22) recalled, "It's easy to notice when there's a group of people against one person trying to provoke him." A female respondent (Asian, 20) said, "If someone is bigger or taller than you, there's a level of power there. In that position, that's there more than anything. Words come after, but size itself is the first thing you see." A male student (Asian, 22) elaborated, "When one is against multiple with tensions going around and the one is being mute, not able to speak or defend themselves. Especially with multiple attackers, I'd think the person is bullied." Peer bystanders attended to power imbalances in a situation to detect bullying.

Exhibition of aggressive behaviors. Bystanders noticed bullying through the observation of aggressive behaviors enacted by perpetrators (*n* = 20, 56%). Two specific categories emerged in regard to noticing aggression, namely verbal (*n* = 16, 44%) and physical (*n* = 12, 33%). First, bystanders noticed bullying when hearing hostile words (*n* = 16, 44%), such as verbal attacks or gossip and rumors. One male student (Caucasian, 21) expressed, "You can tell by people making comments to each other and the reactions. There's verbal stuff where they're clearly mocking them." Other students mentioned noticing indirect bullying, such as gossip and rumors. A female bystander (Caucasian, 18) maintained, "I notice more indirect, like behind other people's backs. I hear people talking about them when they're not in the group." Some students mentioned noticing hostile words online. A female student (Caucasian, 18) put it as, "I'd see it online. They'd call each other out on things with really aggressive language, but then in real life were very non-confrontational." Hearing or seeing verbal aggression indicated bullying.

Bystanders also mentioned noticing bullying through the observation of physical aggression (*n* = 12, 33%). A female participant (Caucasian, 19) recalled, "I usually have headphones in, so it's harder to hear altercations. The only thing that'd raise awareness is physical altercations." One male bystander (Asian, 20) noticed a bullying situation once it turned physical:

> I'm walking down the street at night with a friend. I see two guys talking to one guy. I didn't know if anything was going on, but when I passed them and looked back, the two guys started beating up the one kid. Then I was like, "Oh something's going on over there, we need to help."

Observing physical aggression was an indicator of bullying.

Intention to harm. The perpetrator's intent to harm was noted as a bullying cue (*n* = 20, 56%). A male participant (Caucasian, 19) described bullying as, "It's when you're *intentionally* hurting others emotionally or physically." A female student (African-American, 24) said, "It's bullying when it's done to *intentionally* hurt the person by making them know they're being talking about." Many students described bullies as consciously enacting harm, as one female participant (Caucasian, 18) shared, "Our neighbors have a problem with a roommate and they came to talk about her. I was uncomfortable because they left the door open and she's right across the hall. They wanted her to hear and made sure she did." A female athlete (Caucasian, 22) emphasized the intentionality behind bullying on her team: "There's an older class that'd *intentionally* exclude the two younger ones and go behind their backs, say untrue things to teammates and made them feel bad and question what they were doing wrong." One female participant (Caucasian, 21) talked about bullies' awareness: "My friends *purposely* made a separate group message to exclude someone. She'd say something in one message, but they'd negatively talk about her in the other one without her knowing. Which I realize now was really mean." Bullying was often perceived as a deliberate attack against others.

Bystanders suggested that unprovoked or unwanted aggression (*n* = 11, 31%) was seen as intentional. One female bystander (Asian, 21) asserted, "How you react is important. If someone calls you names and you call them names back, that's equal footing. But if you try to stop it, then clearly that's unwanted." Another female student (Caucasian, 20) elaborated, "If you hear the conversation and them being like, 'Please stop,' then you know they don't want to be in the situation and you should help." Unprovoked and unwanted aggression signaled intentional bullying to bystanders.

Repetition or significance. The last indicator of bullying was the repetition or significance of harm (*n* = 14, 39%). Students noted that prolonged aggression indicated bullying. A female participant (African-American, 24) said, "If it's continuous, that's bullying because the person will feel emotional displacement from the repeated harm." Another female bystander (Caucasian, 21) observed,

> I know there's rifts in friendships and you want to talk about that person with someone, but when it's too much and you're saying harmful things to others that don't know them, so you're shaping opinions of them, that's bullying. I'd tell them what's going on so they can talk to the person who's constantly attacking them.

It can be difficult to discern between bullying and messing around among friends, yet repetitive behaviors indicated bullying. A male participant (Asian, 19) shared, "With a group of my peers, it's this reoccurring thing of, 'What's up shitface?' Or, stuff that's constant every day and sometimes they're joking, but as it builds up it gets worse." Bystanders considered perpetual negative behaviors as bullying.

Some bystanders noted that one instance of discrimination or a sufficiently severe behavior indicated bullying. A female student (Asian, 20) said, "Bullying is prolonged, so it's not one incident. But it depends on whether one incident is significant enough to be counted as harassment for bullying." A male participant (Caucasian, 19) elaborated, "One instance could be bullying if it was based on a specific thing, like a person started a fight because they were African-American. Or if it was significant, like physical or something with large scope online because it's permanent." A single incident was often considered bullying if it was severe (e.g., physical) or discriminatory harassment (e.g., race).

Barriers to noticing bullying. Bystanders identified barriers for noticing bullying among peers. Many students talked about the mindless activities they engaged in while navigating around campus. First, several students noted that they do not pay attention and zone out while on campus (n = 14, 39%). Second, respondents felt distracted with prior or upcoming events (n = 10, 28%). Third, respondents noted that they were preoccupied with technology (n = 9, 25%). The last barrier to recognizing bullying was maintaining social distance norms (n = 7, 19%), including proximity and eye contact (see Table 9).

Some bystanders indicated that while on campus, they were less likely to notice their environments. One male respondent (Caucasian, 19) asserted, "You zone out, get less sleep, walk straight to class, and not notice people around you." Other students ruminated about past events or thought about upcoming events. A male student (Caucasian, 19) noted, "Or you took a bad test so you're not in the right mode to do anything or paying attention. It also depends on if I'm late." Students' preoccupation with technology was another barrier to seeing bullying. A female participant (African-American, 18) recounted, "I'm on my way to class so if I see an altercation, I'll be late. I usually have headphones in so I don't even hear it. I keep walking because I got class." Maintaining social norms regarding space and privacy were also barriers to noticing bullying. One female student (Caucasian, 18) conveyed, "Students on campus distance themselves with confrontation. They walk around with headphones in, looking at their phones like not noticing variables around them. They mute it out because they don't want to interact or make eye contact and keep distance." There were attention and technology barriers to recognizing bullying among peers.

When a few respondents reflected on the BIM, they said noticing bullying was the most challenging. As one female student (Asian, 24) put it, "The first step of being aware, like people aren't aware and it's a habit and not a lot of people are aware." A female student (Caucasian, 19) shared similar concerns about noticing bullying:

> People need to be reminded to pay attention, it's the hardest thing. They're walking around with headphones and not aware of what's going on around them. Which we're all guilty of but being aware is what makes you ready to handle these situations. If you're not paying attention, you're not going to notice it.

Students need to understand the dynamics of bullying in order to recognize problematic situations in their environments.

College bullying 101. The next primary category that emerged from the data in regard to noticing bullying was *College Bullying 101*. This category identified the basic tenets of bullying observed by bystanders. Four secondary codes emerged, including the *types* of bullying seen, *location* of bullying incidents, *who was involved* in bullying, and the *focus of attack*. Frequency statistics are reported for the secondary categories below. Based on the synthesized data, several common college *bullying scenarios* surfaced. The last portion of this section presents five bullying scenarios described by peer bystanders.

Types. Bystanders talked about witnessing various types of bullying in college. First, students most often saw relational bullying in the form of denigration (n = 23, 64%), such that they witnessed gossip, lies, and rumors spread about others. This usually occurred in friend groups through face-to-face interaction or text messages. Students observed relational bullying in the form of exclusion (n = 17, 47%). Exclusion occurred in friend groups, as well as during class group work. Bystanders saw nearly similar

incidents of cyberbullying (*n* = 13, 36%) and verbal bullying (*n* = 12, 33%). Although to a lesser extent, respondents saw peer pressure (*n* = 9, 25%) and physical bullying (*n* = 8, 22%). Bystanders more often saw indirect forms of bullying compared to direct forms.

Locations. Bystanders identified locations where they observed bullying among college peers. First, students frequently observed bullying in classrooms (*n* = 19, 53%). Bullying in classrooms usually occurred during peer groupwork. Students talked about seeing bullying in group text or online messages (*n* = 15, 42%). Many times, students were included in group messages in which someone was being made fun of or excluded. In addition, bullying was routinely seen in dorms. Over a third of the students observed bullying in dorms (*n* = 13, 36%). Bullying was also seen on social media (*n* = 8, 22%), at parties (*n* = 6, 17%), and campus streets (*n* = 4, 11%). Bystanders often observed bullying in familiar places, including classrooms, text messages, and dorms.

Who was involved. Students reflected on who was involved in the bullying they observed. Most often, respondents saw bullying among friends (*n* = 18, 50%), especially relational aggression. Bullying was also seen among classmates working in groups (*n* = 17, 47%). Those students targeted during groupwork were often described as international. Given that many students saw bullying in dorms, they also indicated seeing bullying among roommates (*n* = 10, 28%). Respondents observed bullying among team or clubmates (*n* = 9, 25%), classmates (not during groupwork; *n* = 6, 17%), and strangers (*n* = 5, 14%). Bullying often happened in familiar social networks compared to stranger situations.

Focus of attack. Bystanders talked about the focus of attack being targeted by bullying. Bystanders saw similar incidents of peers being bullied for their race/nationality

(*n* = 16, 44%) as for appearance/clothing (*n* = 16, 44%). Peers' accents and language barriers, in addition to how they presented themselves with artifacts were common attacks seen by bystanders. Respondents also saw peers being targeted for low competencies (e.g., intellect, self-efficacy; *n* = 14, 39%). Moreover, bystanders observed bullying targeted at their peers' gender (*n* = 8, 22%), age (*n* = 7, 17%), social status (*n* = 7, 17%), sexual orientation (*n* = 5, 14%), and disclosure violation (*n* = 5, 14%). To a lesser degree, bystanders saw peers being bullied about alcohol consumption (*n* = 4, 11%), their weight (*n* = 4, 11%), and disability (*n* = 3, 8%; see Table 10). Based on the aforementioned synthesized data, five common bullying scenarios surfaced. The five scenarios are presented next, illustrating common situations peer bystanders observed.

Scenario #1: Indirect, passive bullying. Bystanders talked about bullying as being more indirect and subtler, than direct and obvious. Many respondents described bullying as passive aggression, including denigration and exclusion. One female bystander (Caucasian, 18) claimed, "I've seen indirect, like behind people's backs where someone's different and people talk about them when they're not in the group or setting. I haven't seen face-to-face bullying. People don't have much confrontation." Another female student (Caucasian, 20) agreed, "I've seen people giving a dirty look or not willing to interact with them because they're different, like exclusion. It's more passive aggressive." A female student (Asian, 19) recalled, "You see it on social media or texting. It's more gossip or making fun of people behind their back instead of directly to their face." Bystanders observed indirect, relational bullying.

Many students talked about their awareness regarding the implications of direct bullying. One female student (Caucasian, 19) said, "You don't see it directly, it's sneakier.

Bullies are smarter, they know where they can go without getting in trouble." Some students talked about the legality issues associated with direct bullying. A female bystander (Caucasian, 20) stated, "There's less direct bullying. Being an adult getting in physical altercations carries legality issues." One female respondent (African-American, 21) agreed, "With legal issues, people are reluctant to bully in public so that's why it's in social circles because they shrug it off or don't know it's bullying because it's so common. It's virtual or malicious within friends." Bystanders saw more indirect bullying, likely due to the legal repercussions of direct aggression. In the cases that direct bullying was observed, it largely occurred at parties with alcohol or among strangers at night on campus streets.

Scenario #2: Bullying in the dorms. Bystanders described seeing bullying in the dorms with roommates, especially denigration. A female bystander (Caucasian, 22) shared, "It's a problem in a confined space with dorms and gossiping. It's hard for some people to talk about something aside from others." Another female respondent (Caucasian, 19) noted, "I see it in dorms, especially when roommates don't get along. It's passive bullying, like gossip that eventually gets back to the person." One female bystander (Caucasian, 21) shared the pervasiveness of bullying in dorms among female peers: "The bullying was in the privacy of dorms, so literally at home when you're forced to be around certain people. I haven't heard any with boys but a lot with girls' living situations and roommates being nasty." The stories of indirect bullying in dorms surfaced more from female bystanders compared to male bystanders. A descriptive account of bullying in dorms deserves attention. One female respondent (Asian, 22) recalled,

> My friend was gay and in the dorms the boys ridiculed his clothing and interest in men and forced him to speak to girls and hold their hands. It had a great emotional impact because he was trying to identify himself and maintain an image. People don't accept others who are different and make them conform to society's rules.

This detailed narrative illustrated the extent of bullying seen in dorms.

Scenario #3: Bullying among friends. Bystanders frequently observed bullying among their *friends*. As one female respondent (Caucasian, 18) put it, "It happens with friends like if they're living the dorm or have a surface level friendship or in the same group." A female respondent (Caucasian, 24) reflected, "My friends had a group message and purposely made a separate one to exclude one person and talk behind her back. Which I realize now was really mean." This respondent realized that she perhaps participated in the online and relational bullying with her friends. One female bystander (Caucasian, 19) stated, "It's in group chats with my friends where they single out one person and get everybody to gang up on them or make fun of them. There's a lot of group chats made against one person, behind their back." Many bystanders observed bullying among their friends, and at times, realized that they were active participants in the bullying situation.

A few bystanders talked about observing bullying in the form of peer pressure, largely revolving around the consumption of alcohol. One male student (Caucasian, 20) noted, "At parties I see peer pressure that turns into bullying like, 'You need to drink this. You need to do this to fit in', it's more passive-aggressive. But it's happening in friend groups which is harder to resist." A female student (Caucasian, 21) also observed, "The

main one is peer pressure with drugs and alcohol and even if someone is your friend, they still have a huge influence on you." Some students witnessed peer pressure among friends, a particularly challenging situation to manage.

Scenario #4: Classroom bullying. Bystanders talked about bullying in classrooms during groupwork or lecture. Bullying was described as being exclusionary and ganging up on one peer during groupwork. One female student (Caucasian, 21) said, "There's snarky comments people make, they don't think it hurts but it does. Especially in small groups, one person is subtly being pushed down with whatever they say." A male student (Caucasian, 19) elaborated, "In classrooms it's not as obvious. It's demeaning someone and your group and making it so you're the group leader by making others feel like they're not worth as much." Singling out of a peer was mentioned as bullying seen in class, as one female bystander (African-American, 21) shared, "I've seen in class groups, people have different opinions and if you have the unpopular one, they gang up on them."

Although to a lesser extent, a handful of students saw bullying during class lecture. A female respondent (Asian, 19) disclosed,

> I've noticed in class this one kid, he's kind of different, but really smart and works well with people. This other kid has an issue with him. He'll say something, and the other kid will retort with something else, and the teacher is like, "Okay, none of that," but it doesn't stop. He'll keep saying messed up stuff.

Some students observed peers being bullied when they made comments or asked questions during lecture. A male student (Caucasian, 21) explained, "Someone in class with a strong lisp will ask a question, then you'll hear people snicker, point to her, and make jokes to someone about the way she's talking. It's immature, but noticeable. I bet

she's aware of it." Bullying seen in classrooms largely occurred during groupwork, yet a few students saw it during lecture.

Scenario #5: International student bullying. Bystanders often described seeing international students being bullied, usually for their accent or competencies. One male student (Asian, 22) remarked, "Most of my international friends have experienced *major* discrimination in class. Mostly about their accent and performance." Exclusion was often a result for international students in groups, as a female student (African-American, 24) recalled, "It's common with race. I've seen the only African-American or Asian student in a science lab when people supposed to help each other, and they were gossiped about and excluded because of their accent or not knowing the technology or facilities." A male student (Asian, 22) suggested that the language barrier for international students created group challenges: "It's a teamwork-based class and she wasn't very fluent in English but tried to contribute to her team but they didn't let her participate and ignored her. She has feelings and thoughts, but it's hard for her to deliver." Another female student (Asian, 25) recalled seeing exclusion, "In groups projects, my friend tried to contribute, but they leave her out of group messaging and decision makings, then ratted her out to the professor that she wasn't trying. In reality she was trying, but just ignored."

Some bystanders saw exclusion start the moment students formed groups in class. A female respondent (African-American, 18) recounted,

> As soon as the teacher says "Get into groups of four," everyone forms their groups and international students are in the middle looking around, like "Which way do I go?" They look frustrated because they can't change the class and say,

"You're always excluding me," because they'd be mean and say, "Why don't you just quickly find a group?"

During groupwork, some bystanders saw international students' ideas and perspectives being disregarded. One female bystander (Asian, 21) shared, "I've seen in small groups, they contribute something with White students and they'd disregard what they said and only work within themselves as a group with their own clan." There were racial and ethnic power imbalances represented in the stories, as another female student (Asian, 24) mentioned, "I've seen them come up with an idea and say it five times and everyone ignores it. Then some White dude says, 'let's do this,' and it's the exact thing they said. And everyone's like, 'oh yeah, great idea.'" Bullying targeted at international students appeared in many stories, especially among those bystanders of a minority ethnic or racial group.

Overall, student bystanders identified five cues as indictive of bullying, namely hurt feelings, power imbalance, aggression, intent to harm, and repetition or severity. Students also recognized various aspects of college bullying, including the types of bullying seen, locations of bullying, who was involved, and the foci of attacks. Given these aspects of bullying, five commonly depicted bullying scenarios were presented to illustrate how college bystanders recognize bullying among their peers.

BIM step 2: Interpret harm. The second research question from the focus groups asked, "What do students say about interpreting bullying as hurtful?" Two primary categories emerged to make sense of how students interpreted harm, namely *Hurtful Factors* and *Barriers to Interpret Harm.*

Hurtful factors. Bystanders identified aspects of bullying perceived as particularly harmful. Five secondary categories surfaced that illustrate the hurtful characteristics of bullying, including rumors and gossip (*n* = 17, 47%), negative affect on target well-being (*n* = 15, 42%), online or large scope (*n* = 10, 28%), friend or social ramifications (*n* = 9, 25%), and new students (*n* = 9, 25%; see Table 11).

Rumors and gossip. The spreading of rumors and gossip was viewed as harmful by peer bystanders (*n* = 17, 47%). One female student (Caucasian, 19) said, "There's something about going behind someone's back because you're hearing the accounts from other people. It's hurtful because you're trying to form an idea of what they said." Not hearing first-hand what bullies said was seen as hurtful. A female respondent (Caucasian, 21) shared, "The intensity of the bullying is far less when it's in your face. If people say something when you're not present, it goes a lot farther than if you're standing in front of them. It's more malicious behind your back." Some bystanders thought bullies were more malicious when behind the back of a target compared with face-to-face.

Students perceived relational bullying as hurtful because targets did not have the ability to defend themselves. As one female student (Caucasian, 18) noted, "When you're face to face you can do something about it, but if it's behind your back you can't control that." A male participant (African-American, 20) agreed, "Even if you're confident to stand up for yourself, you don't have any power because you're not there and it's behind your back." The uncontrollability of relational aggression was perceived as damaging by bystanders. One female student (Asian, 22) shared, "When people spread rumors, you have no control over it because they don't confront you with it, so you can't defend or justify yourself. The rumors just spread and escalate." Another female participant

(African-American, 21) recalled, “If I heard rumors were spread about me, I'd get panicky. I’d have no sense of control because it wasn't done to my face.” Relational bullying was viewed as painful due to the lack of control over information shared.

Bystanders noted that the target’s awareness of the attacks factored into bullying being perceived as harmful. As one female (Caucasian, 19) said, “As long as the person being bullied is aware about it, it’s damaging. If they’re not aware, it probably won’t affect them.” When a target is directly bullied, it happens face-to-face in real time. When a target is relationally bullied, it happens without their awareness or presence in the situation. For a target to find out about relational bullying that occurred in the *past* was perceived as damaging. A male participant (Asian, 23) explained, “Gossiping is detrimental, because it hurts you in ways that you don’t realize until you find out about it.” A female student (Asian, 22) agreed, “If people say something about you behind your back, and suddenly you hear about it from someone, that will hurt you most.” The target’s awareness of relational bullying was indictive of the bullying being harmful. One male respondent (Caucasian, 19) noted, “People can talk about me behind my back, but as long as I don’t know, then it’s not going to affect my well-being. But once you hear that people are talking behind your back, that really blows your confidence.” Target’s awareness of relational bullying was described as having detrimental outcomes.

Target well-being. Bystanders interpreted bullying as harmful when it negatively affected the target’s well-being (n = 15, 42%). A female respondent (Asian, 22) said, “When it starts affecting the person getting bullied to the level that other aspects of their life and performance towards other areas get worse, that’s when they need help.” One female student (African-American, 24) claimed, “It’s bad when it affects the person

emotionally and they can't focus on important things, like their relationships and school and work. I'd step in then." Bystanders perceived the need to help when bullying began to negatively affect the well-being of targets in various aspects of their lives.

Some bystanders mentioned that they might interpret harm in a situation, yet they rely on observing how it affected the target to discern whether help is needed. One male bystander (Caucasian, 20) shared, "It's about the impact on the target. I may think physical is worse, but someone else doesn't. You have to watch how it's affecting their life. When it turns negative, that's when you know harms done and they need help." Bystanders attended to the outcome of the situation on the target's well-being to discern if help was needed. A female student (Asian, 24) said, "It's about resilience. I heard gossip about me and it wasn't cool, but it's not detrimental to my well-being. My friend went through the same situation and it really affected her. It depends on the context and person." Bystanders were aware that bullying affects peers differently. Thus, they found it important to assess how bullying affected the target's well-being to discern harm.

Online or large scope. Bullying was interpreted as hurtful when it was online or had a large audience and scope (n = 10, 28%). A female student (Caucasian, 21) said, "It's more hurtful on a public platform. Whether it's verbal, physical, or online, the more people that see or interact with it, the more embarrassing it is for the person." Bullying situations involving large audiences were perceived as detrimental. Many students mentioned online bullying as malicious, given the large scope. A male student (Asian, 24) claimed, "Bullying on social media is worse. The audience is bigger, it's everywhere, and everyone's talking about it. There might be people who have seen it who you meet

later on and they have a preconceived notion of you." Online bullying can reach larger audiences and affect other bystanders' perceptions about the target.

Online bullying was seen as an easier platform for bullies to get the support and encouragement from others. A male bystander (African-American, 19) explained, "When bullies have encouragement, it's worse for the victim because there's support systems where everybody likes it. Online is worse because somebody gets bullied then people like it, so it shows to more people. Where physical, only a few people see it." Online bullying can have larger audiences, making its consequences particularly hurtful. A female athlete (Caucasian, 22) recalled seeing her teammate's pain caused by cyberbullying: "We'd have a bad game or she made a wrong move and people would be on social media calling her out about her performance. Social media is a huge part of our lives, so being able to easily bully everyone sucks." Bystanders interpreted the potential vast scope and permanence of cyberbullying as damaging.

Social ramifications. Bullying that involved peer or social consequences was interpreted as harmful (n = 9, 25%). One female participant (African-American, 20) disclosed, "Relational bullying happens within social networks of people you know, so that history and connection plays into it being more hurtful." Bullying within established social networks was viewed as hurtful, likely due to the potential social costs. Another female student (Caucasian, 21) elaborated, "Hearing that people are saying things behind your back really hurts, but it depends on your relationship. If it's some random guy, whatever. But if it's someone you're close with then *ouch*." One male participant (Caucasian, 20) recalled,

> When people you think are friends say mean things behind your back, that can really lower your confidence. I know this one guy who was hanging out with his friends in the dorm. Macs are linked up to your phones so you can see texts on Macs. He was on this girl's computer looking for a song and she got a text saying, "Why is he still here? He should leave. Nobody wants him here." He thought they were his close friends and for him to see that and be hurt that way really sucked.

For students to learn that their *friends* bullied them was seen as painful by peer bystanders.

New students. Some bystanders suggested that new students were especially at risk of harm from bullying, including freshmen or students from other states or countries (n = 9, 25%). A female student (Asian, 23) claimed, "Especially if a freshman who just came to the university far away from home and they're trying to fit in, they like really succumb under the pressure and also feel the most pain from it." New students unfamiliar with the college were viewed as particularly at risk of bullying consequences. One female student (Asian, 22) noted, "It's usually seniors or people you don't know well but want to establish a connection with for any reason, so you abide by whatever they say, and it can get really harsh." Peer bystanders interpreted new or recently affiliated students to the college as populations that can be distinctly harmed by bullying.

Barriers to interpret harm. Bystanders expressed ambiguity for interpreting harm in certain bullying contexts. Three secondary categories emerged that illustrate the barriers experienced by bystanders for interpreting harmful situations in need of aid. The barriers include: target provocation or retaliation (n = 22, 61%), potential friends just *messing around* (n = 18, 50%), and conflict or *drama* (n = 16, 44%; see Table 11).

Target provocation or retaliation. Bystanders expressed uncertainty for whether some bullying situations involved a provocation or retaliation (n = 22, 61%). One male participant (Asian, 20) put it as, "When people use their words negatively to someone who uses their strength, there's gonna be a fight like you asked for it. But sometimes it escalates and it's hard to know who started what and why." Identifying the roles in a bullying situation was a barrier mentioned by bystanders. One female participant (African-American, 21) was uncertain whether a behavior was a defense response or bullying: "She turned on us, then we turned on her. We didn't take it too far but returned the favor of what she did in a confrontational aggressive way. Some people took it like bullying the bully. I don't know, is that bullying?" Negative reactions or retaliatory behaviors to bullying victimization created ambiguity for some bystanders in their attempts to assess harm.

Some students expressed uncertainty for distinguishing target responses aimed at defending oneself versus retaliation. A female student (Caucasian, 21) declared, "Where is the line between defending yourself and being overly mean to the other person? That's a situation to situation basis that is hard to know when you assess it." Another female student (African-American, 21) expressed this barrier: "There are ways my friends not bully but we'd be like, they're excluding us, so we're going to make our own group chat and exclude them. I don't know if it's bullying or finding ways to cope by splitting off." Many students highlighted the uncertainty for interpreting a harmful situation, as it may involve a provocation or retaliation.

Friends messing around. Another uncertainty mentioned from bystanders was differentiating bullying from friends messing around (n = 18, 50%). A female participant

(Caucasian, 20) said, “It can be hard with pushing or hitting on the arm to distinguish, are they just friends pushing each other or is it like, this kid doesn't want to be pushed and is in a vulnerable situation.” Another female student (Caucasian, 19) elaborated, “When it’s jokes, it's hard to tell if it's actually a joke or if it’s a dig at someone. If everyone's joking then somebody slips in a comment, it’s hard to know if it's meant to be mean.” Assessing harmful intent among peer interactions was a barrier for bystanders. One female student (Asian, 24) shared,

> When you know your friends well, you know when they need help and when they're out of control in a situation. Whereas a stranger, you don't know if they have an escape route or are with someone or if they know the person. For step two, it's hard to differentiate between the friendship and stranger, like how to identify one that it is actually hurtful to others and it’s not just messing around or that they need or even want help.

Observing a potential bullying situation among strangers created uncertainty about whether the people involved were friends having good natured or hurtful interactions.

Conflict and drama. Distinguishing a situation as bullying compared to conflict or drama was another barrier to interpreting harm (n = 16, 44%). One female student (Caucasian, 20) noted, “I’m trying to answer the question of, where is the line between bullying and like drama or conflict, just everyday experiences that you're not gonna get along with everybody?” *Drama* was a commonly evoked term by female bystanders to describe conflict episodes. Discerning drama from bullying was challenging, as one female student (Caucasian, 20) noted, “I live with four girls so there's bound to be drama and people talking behind their backs. I don't know if it's bullying, but it's passive

aggressiveness or not including somebody because they're annoying." Some bystanders were uncertain whether exclusion passed into the threshold of bullying.

Conflict and drama were perceived as normal, yet some students were unsure when situations became bullying. One female student (Caucasian, 22) recalled, "It's tough to say, is it bullying or someone getting angry in the moment? Like every once in a while, you talk crap because that's what people do." Another female student (Caucasian, 21) disclosed, "With gossiping in the dorms, they might think of it as ranting and trying to de-stress when it could be harmful to that person if you are completely bashing them." The awareness of the person being targeted can indicate whether a situation was conflict or bullying. A female student (Asian, 19) explained,

> You see it on social media or texting, so it's more gossip or making fun of people behind their back instead of to their face. I don't know if that counts. *(Interviewer: Do you think it counts as bullying?)* It's mean, but if they never find out about it then it can't hurt them. But if they do, then yeah.

Bystanders noticed hurtful aspects about bullying, yet experienced difficulty interpreting harm and need for help in some circumstances.

In sum, bystanders interpreted various aspects of bullying as hurtful, including rumors or gossip, negative affect on well-being, online or large audience, social ramifications, and new students. Bystanders also identified a few barriers for interpreting harm in possible bullying situations, such as uncertainty about provocation or retaliation, friends messing around, and conflict or drama. As one female student (African-American, 21) asserted, "We have an obligation to tell the story right. So asking or feeling out the situation and seeing who actually is the victim and then saying something about it is the

better way to go." Given the barriers for interpreting harm in bullying, some students iterated the importance of understanding the situation dynamics before getting involved.

BIM step 3: Motivation to help. The third research question from the focus groups asked, "What do students say about motivations for helping bullied peers?" Two primary categories emerged regarding bystanders' motivations to help bullied peers, namely *Internal Motivations* and *External Motivations*.

Internal motivations. Peer bystanders identified several internally-focused motivations for bullying interventions. Four secondary internal motivation categories emerged, including empathy (n = 24, 67%), safety (n = 20, 56%), self-efficacy (n = 18, 50%), and morals (n = 13, 36%; see Table 12).

Empathy. The most commonly identified internal motivation for helping bullied peers was empathy. Bystanders who were previously bullied felt motivated to help others, as they understood the hurt caused. One female student (Caucasian, 20) noted, "I've been bullied and it doesn't feel good. Roles reversed, I'd want somebody to say something to me because I know it sucks." Empathy propelled a male student (African-American, 19) to say, "I was bullied, so that fuels me to help others. If I see someone being bullied, I know what they feel and I'll stop it. If you never got bullied, it will pass by you. You'd never see it or care." Bystanders were also more motivated to help when they observed a target being bullied about a relatable characteristic. A female participant (Caucasian, 19) shared, "I'm gay and disabled so if someone is bullied for any of those reasons, I'm going to say something because I know how it feels." Prior experience being bullied, especially about relatable characteristics, motivated bystanders to intervene.

Another reason why empathy motivated interventions was that it informed effective response behaviors. A female respondent (Caucasian, 21) recalled,

> It helps if you know how to respond. You could go toe-to-toe with a bully all day and keep escalating the situation. But, being bullied helps you understand what you need to do to deescalate the situation. It's motivating to make you help others, because you learn from experience and understand the best ways to go about things and pass that wisdom on.

Previously bullied bystanders recalled what they would have wanted done in their situations to determine response options. One male respondent (Caucasian, 21) mentioned, "If you can see yourself in that situation of knowing why it hurts, you relate more and actually know what to say and do. But something you haven't experienced or can't place yourself in, you won't know what to do." Having the ability to understand and relate to the bullying experience propelled bystander intervention motivations.

Safety. Bystanders mentioned that their perceived safety for interventions motivated response behaviors (n = 20, 56%). One female participant (Asian, 21) shared, "Intervening puts you at risk, especially a stranger. It's like, is it my place to say something or is it safe? It's hard cause they could attack you and you are now involved. You could be bullied by that person." Fear of bullying involvement or retaliation often decreased bystanders' motivation to help. Many international students felt safety concerns for bullying interventions. As one male student (Asian, 20) put it, "If someone's getting bullied it's hard to take action because I may get in trouble. I'm international and my visa status is influenced by how I act and my criminal record. I wouldn't jeopardize my status as a foreigner here."

Quite a few international students were concerned about their visa or college status for interventions. One female student (Asian, 22) shared, “Being international, even though I feel strongly against white supremacy, I would not speak up against it. I've come here on a visa so it’s risky.” Another female bystander (Asian, 22) agreed, “It can get me in trouble, so I won’t be comfortable to interfere. I don't have a family in this country, so if I do something it’d be easier for the police to bully me.” Some students were aware of possible college or legal repercussions for interventions. A female bystander (African, 21) recounted,

> I'm an international student and being at risk of our visas, like the slightest thing we can get in trouble for. It's hard to defend others because we have more at stake. A lot of times we bite our tongues and hold back what we feel when we see others not treated good.

Bystanders were less motivated to help when they feared retaliation or threats to their student or immigrant status.

Self-efficacy. Another bystander motivation for bullying intervention was self-efficacy (n = 18, 50%). Some bystanders felt high self-efficacy for interventions (*n* = 11, 31%), whereas other bystanders felt low self-efficacy (*n* = 7, 19%). One female participant (Caucasian, 21) recalled, “I’m more extraverted and don’t feel that power imbalance as much, but someone who wasn't would definitely not want to step in.” A female bystander (African-American, 21) mentioned, “I’m confrontational like I stand for what I believe in. I wouldn't want someone to be mean to me or bully me in front of my face in high school. But now, I can defend myself and others too.” High self-efficacy motivated some peer bystanders to intervene in bullying.

Other bystanders expressed low self-efficacy for interventions (*n* = 7, 19%), thus reducing their motivation to help. One female student (Caucasian, 19) noted, "I'm not good at confrontation. I'm not really sure if I would even if it was my friend. I'm not sure what I would do." Bystanders with low self-efficacy were unlikely to intervene, even when situations involved friends. Another female participant (Caucasian, 21) recalled, "For me as an introvert, I wouldn't step up for someone who I don't know. I probably wouldn't anyway for someone I know because I don't have the confidence to confront them. I wouldn't have much to contribute." Bystanders' self-efficacy for peer bullying interventions influenced their motivation to help.

Morals. The last internal motivator for bullying interventions was morals (*n* = 13, 36%). Some bystanders felt motivated to help because it was the *right thing* to do. One female student (Caucasian, 19) recalled, "I haven't had a lot of experience being bullied. But, I hold myself to certain values and I wouldn't want to be treated that way. So, it's morals for me." This bystander's values propelled her to aid in bullying situations. Some bystanders mentioned the dual role of morals and empathy on motivation. A female student (African-American, 18) stated, "I've been bullied and have a moral obligation. Some situations are morals if I've never experienced that. Others I identify with and feel for the person. I think of my experiences and do what I'd wish others would have done." Another female participant (African-American, 21) noted that, while empathy can motivate interventions, morals was most important:

> Sure you need a stake in it, like race or gender, knowing these struggles personally is why you'd prevent bullying motivated by those factors, but it's not always the case. I'm black and Muslim and I've faced it, but someone who's

> Christian or White can act on basic human rights and morals. To know it's wrong and intervene.

Bystanders identified moral obligations as a motivator to intervene in bullying.

External motivations. Bystanders also identified externally-focused motivations for bullying interventions. Four secondary external motivations emerged from the data, including target relationship (n = 32, 89%), severity (n = 27, 75%), uncontrollable attributions (n = 26, 71%), and bully relationship (n = 22, 61%; see Table 12).

Target relationship. Most bystanders (n = 32, 89%) were motivated to intervene in bullying when they were relationally close to the target. One male student (Asian, 20) said, "If I don't know the person well, then it's not worth fighting for and I wouldn't intervene. If it was a close friend that's worth fighting for." Some bystanders felt emotional contagion when observing close others being bullied. A female student (African-American, 18) asserted, "If I saw a close friend being bullied, it's as if they're bullying me. I'd take action no matter how small or big the problem, because their happiness is my happiness and their sadness is my sadness." Bystanders who witnessed friends being bullied felt a great sense of responsibility to help.

There were several reasons why bystanders were motivated to intervene on behalf of friends. First, bystanders perceived less ambiguity in bullying situations involving friends. A female student (Asian, 20) recalled, "We talked about knowing the situation and how context is important, and chances are you know the context more if it's a friend that told you or just general signs you've seen, as opposed to strangers." When a friend was bullied, bystanders had more contextual information to effectively intervene. Bystanders were also motivated to intervene for bullied friends due to relational

expectations and role obligations. A female bystander (Caucasian, 22) shared, "If I saw one of my close friends getting bullied, like we stand up for one another. That's what friends do, we have each other's backs." A few bystanders mentioned that, roles reversed, they would expect reciprocal helping behavior from friends. A female participant (Caucasian, 20) disclosed, "I feel responsibility because I'd hope that, roles reversed, they would do that for me. If I were in the situation, that would hurt my feelings and I'd expect my friends to help." Close relationships were characterized by expectations of reciprocity, which motivated bystanders to help. The bystander's relationship with the target was the greatest reported motivation, indicating the significance of close relationships for peer interventions.

Severity. Bystanders were motivated to intervene in bullying situations perceived as severe (n = 27, 75%). As one male student (Caucasian, 20) shared, "I'd intervene if it's severe. If it's something clearly spiteful and harsh, it's not okay." The more severe the incident, the less ambiguity there was with interpreting harm. This was particularly the case for physical incidents of bullying. A male participant (African-American, 19) said, "It's hard when you don't know the backstory. I've seen couples fighting like verbal abuse, but like, what has she done to him? What has he done to her? I won't get involved unless it's physical." Physical bullying motivated bystander interventions. A female participant (African-American, 21) shared, "It's a lot of passive behaviors in college. I've adapted to mind my own business, unless I see somebody getting beaten up. Apart from that if it's words then I'm like, 'Y'all started it, that's your problem.'" Physical and severe aggression yielded less ambiguity for interpreting harm, motivating student bystanders to intervene in bullying.

Uncontrollable attributions. Bystanders (*n* = 26, 72%) were more motivated to intervene on behalf of those individuals targeted for something out of their control (i.e., uncontrollable attribution) compared to something they can control (i.e., controllable attribution). A female student (Caucasian, 20) illustrated this theme: "If they can't defend themselves, like disabled and somebody was being cruel, nobody should be treated that way because they can't help it. I'd step in more about those things than if somebody's wearing a weird shirt or something." Being bullied about characteristics that people cannot change about themselves propelled bystander motivations. A female respondent (Caucasian, 20) noted,

> We talked about how sometimes you're not sure if it's bullying or teasing. But, once it gets racist or homophobic, it's obviously not a friend thing. They're attacking someone because of who they are. It's easier to step in because there's not as much gray area.

Observing peers being targeted for discriminatory reasons created less ambiguity in interpreting harm, thus motivating bystanders to help.

Bystanders identified specific attack characteristics that motivated interventions. The foci of attack that bystanders felt more responsible to intervene on behalf of include: race/ethnicity (*n* = 16, 44%), disability (*n* = 13, 36%), religion (*n* = 8, 22%), sexual orientation (*n* = 6, 17%), and gender (*n* = 4, 11%). Bullying targeted at race or ethnicity was a motivating factor for bystander interventions (*n* = 16, 44%). A female student (Caucasian, 21) shared, "I'm more likely to intervene if it was an international student or anything with race 'cause they can't sometimes articulate their thoughts as well. And with race, people can't change that." One male participant (Asian, 20) recounted, "If someone

is rejected because their race, I'd definitely intervene. I know more about that and it's a core piece of who people are." Race-based bullying propelled bystanders to help peers, as one female student (Asian, 19) put it, "The ideology behind the bullying matters. If someone were being bullied on a racial basis, I'd feel more compelled to intervene."

Bystanders observing bullying targeted at disabilities motivated intervention (*n* = 13, 36%). For instance, a female participant (Caucasian, 19) disclosed, "If somebody can't help who they are as a person, like a disability, they shouldn't be made fun of for that. That's when people should step in." Another female respondent (Caucasian, 22) mentioned, "I'd step in if someone was targeted for a disability. That's something I've helped people with and it isn't something they can control." In addition to disabilities, bystanders viewed bullying targeted at religion (*n* = 8, 22%) as prompting interventions. A female student (Caucasian, 21) noted, "If it was somebody getting bullied for wearing a hijab or religion, I'd step in, like I had to do that last semester." Empathy and uncontrollable attributions simultaneously motivated some students to intervene. A female participant (African-American, 21) recalled, "I wear my race and religion and know a lot about those things. I'm more likely to intervene then because we're already portrayed in certain ways in the media. You can make a difference by helping and changing people's perceptions." Religion-based bullying was a motivating factor to help. For a few bystanders of a minority group, helping bullied others was seen as a possible way to alter people's misconceptions and stereotypes.

Being bullied about sexual orientation (*n* = 6, 17%) was another uncontrollable attribution motivating some students to intervene. A female participant (Caucasian, 20) said, "I've heard from my gay friends, like their stories of being bullied and how much it

hurt because it's a core part of their identity. I'd definitely step in if I saw something like that." A handful of participants reported that they were motivated to intervene in bullying targeted at gender (*n* = 4, 11%). One female student (Asian, 21) shared, "Gender and racism issues are close to my heart. If I am in a situation or aware that somebody is bullied for that, I will intervene and not hold back." Clearly, when peer bystanders made uncontrollable attributions about why the target was bullied, they were inclined to help.

Bully relationship. Bystanders' relationship with the bully influenced their intervention motivations (*n* = 22, 61%). Students were differently influenced by their relationship with the bully, such that some were motivated to intervene on behalf of friends who bully (*n* = 15, 42%), whereas others were less inclined to intervene when the bully was a friend (*n* = 7, 19%). Some bystanders were inclined to intervene in order to correct a friend's aggressive behavior. A male participant (Caucasian, 21) shared, "You have a stake in it because you know them, you can fix the wrong, you are someone who can make a difference and that's sort of on you as a friend." Participants were also fearful that their friends who bullied others would face consequences and repercussions, thus they were motivated to intervene. A female respondent (Asian, 20) noted, "If my friend is bullying others, I will calm my friend down. I know there are bad consequences, my friend will get in trouble. So, I'd try to help solve their problems." Participants were concerned about the potential trouble their friends could experience for bullying others.

Other bystanders were less motivated to intervene in situations in which the bully was a friend (*n* = 7, 19%). Bystanders were concerned about damaging the relationship, as a female student (Caucasian, 21) said, "It's hard when they're your friend. I can say anything to people I don't know. But when it's your friend what you say impacts the

relationship. There's more at stake." Another female bystander (Asian, 22) agreed, "People ignore things because it's their friends who are the ones bullying, and it's not important enough to get in the way of their friendship." A female student (African-American, 18) shared, "It makes it harder when you know the person. You don't want to hurt their feelings or the friendship. In that situation I wouldn't say something." Fear of damaging their relationship with the bully made some bystanders less likely to help.

Another reason why bystanders were hesitant to intervene in response to a bully they knew was fear of losing social status. A female respondent (Asian, 22) noted, "If the person bullying is someone popular and you complain against them, it turns into an issue and you get isolated." Another female student (Caucasian, 21) stated, "Especially in student groups when you want to keep a reputation. Someone who's really cool is bullying and you want to keep them happy so you don't say anything. There's a social cost." The cost to peer bystanders' social status reduced motivations to intervene.

Although some bystanders expressed less motivation to intervene when a friend bullied others, they were also influenced by the severity of the bullying. A male bystander (Asian, 20) shared, "If they're taunting or making fun of certain, even Asian people like me, I wouldn't say anything, I'm better off with my friends. But if it's very direct and hurting the person like they're crying, then I'd step in and stop my friends." The severity of bullying enacted by friends influenced bystanders' motivation to intervene. A male student (Asian, 20) agreed, "I'm less likely to intervene with a friend because they'll wonder why I'm not supporting them. But if it gets to the point of clearly harming someone or so direct others notice, I'll step in." If bullying got to a level of severity and clearly hurt the target, bystanders were more inclined to intervene even if a

friend was bullying. The bystander's relationship with the target and bully influenced motivations to intervene. As one female participant (African-American, 18) put it, "My relationship with the person gives me more motivation to do something if it's somebody I know who's involved, either the person who's bullying or being bullied."

Overall, bystanders identified various motivations for peer bullying interventions. The four internally-focused motivations that influenced bystander intervention responses were empathy, safety, self-efficacy, and morals. There were also four externally-focused motivations that affected bystander interventions, including their relationship with the target and bully, severity of bullying, and uncontrollable attributions.

BIM step 4: Knowledge of interventions. The fourth research question from the focus groups asked, "What do students say they know about bystander intervention strategies?" Three primary categories emerged to explain bystanders' knowledge of bullying intervention strategies, including *Target-focused Strategies*, *Situation-focused Strategies*, and *Bullying Education*.

Target-focused strategies. When students were asked what they knew about bullying interventions, many mentioned strategies focused on the target. Five secondary categories were created to illustrate specific strategies focused on helping the target. First, bystanders identified nurturant support as a strategy (n = 20, 56%), followed by getting the bullied peer away from the situation (n = 14, 39%). The third noted intervention strategy was inclusion (n = 11, 31%), then problem-solving (n = 9, 25%). The last target-focused strategy was improving self-efficacy (n = 8, 22%; see Table 13).

Social support. Bystanders identified nurturant or affectively-oriented support as an intervention strategy (n = 20, 56%). One female student (Asian, 20) shared, "Give the

support where you stay with them until they calm down, feel safe, and comfortable." Offering nurturant support was largely viewed as an effective response (*n* = 12, 33%). A female student (Caucasian, 21) mentioned, "I'd intervene by providing emotional support because you need to touch base in a situation where someone is feeling bad about themselves and they need to know somebody cares. Just focus on the victim, that's most effective." Strategies that also focused on improving the target's self-esteem were seen as useful. A female student (Caucasian, 20) shared, "It's easier to hype someone up if they're feeling down about being bullied. Giving praise will make them feel better about themselves and the situation." Boosting the bullied target's confidence was viewed as helpful. Another female student (Asian, 21) noted, "Instead of confronting the bully, because they're not going to change, I'd encourage the person being bullied like, 'Be confident! You don't deserve this.' Make them feel more powerful and like they're not alone." Improving self-esteem about the characteristic targeted by the bully was seen as an effective strategy. A male student (Asian, 21) mentioned, "Especially with bullied people who dress or talk differently, I'll compliment them on that because someone made them feel like crap for it." Bystanders mentioned intervention responses focused on improving the bullied target's emotional well-being and self-esteem.

Nurturant support primacy. Bystanders identified two caveats for the effectiveness of nurturant support as an intervention response. First, participants suggested that nurturant support should be the first and primary response to the bullying situation (*n* = 6, 17%). A female participant (African-American, 21) asserted, "Pay attention to the person who's being bullied. Not coming back at the bully, but support, talk to them and be there for them. Block the bully and see how you can help them first,

then address the bullying." Another female respondent (Caucasian, 21) declared, "I'd intervene by providing emotional support. Bullies want attention and reactions, so don't acknowledge them and focus on the target. If they see other people noticing they'll stop. If they don't, then you can confront the bully." Initially focusing on the target's well-being before addressing the bully or bullying situation was portrayed as a helpful intervention response.

Multiple support types. The provision of *only* nurturant support was not viewed as helpful by some participants. Bystanders suggested that bullied peers also need support to address the bullying problem (n = 5, 14%). One female student (Asian, 20) noted, "You don't want to pity the person too much because that'd make them feel weak, so there has to be a line. They actually need help to stop the bullying, so you can't just give sympathy." Offering only nurturant support could have an inverse outcome by making the bullied target feel incapable of handling the situation. A female student (Asian, 22) shared, "Least effective would be only showing pity. You make the person feel weaker or guilty for whatever happened to them. There needs to be more like actions to do something about bullying." Although nurturant support can initially offer comfort and boost confidence, bullied students also needed support focused on remediating the issue.

In addition to nurturant support, students suggested offering informational support to help bullied targets problem-solve (n = 9, 25%). Participants were inclined to help their bullied peers think through options to end the victimization. A female participant (Asian, 24) noted, "If it's a one-off thing then yeah self-esteem building. But if it's something habitual, then you need to help them think about how to get out of the situation in the future and actually fix the problem." Knowing that bullying would reoccur motivated

bystanders to problem-solve with their peers. Another female student (Caucasian, 20) said, “It’s good to talk to the victim, because making a decision to intervene on your own could hurt them. Support them but ask what actions they want to take and help them achieve it. Let them have that control.” Bystanders noted the importance of informational support to address the bullying situation.

Bystanders were also motivated to improve their peers’ self-efficacy to manage bulling incidents (n = 8, 22%). One female student (Asian, 22) shared, “The most effective is encouraging the person to stand up for themselves, even after the bullying is done. Make them feel better, then give them a sense of courage to stop it.” A female participant (Caucasian, 18) recounted,

> What is really effective is, like the friend I was talking about, my friend group was bullying her about her friend and I've been making her more confident. I told her even though they don't like your friend much, you can say something. And she actually last week stood up to them and said, ‘This is my friend. You don't have to like her, but I don't want to hear you talking poorly about her.’ Which I was on the group chat like ‘Yeah girl! Tell them!’

Nurturant support, followed by informational support or support aimed to improve the target’s self-efficacy to manage the situation was often seen as effective.

Get them away from the situation. Another frequently identified bystander response was directing the target away from the situation (n = 14, 39%). As one female student (Caucasian, 20) put it, “I wouldn't step in on the bullies because they're not rational. I'd talk to the victim and try to guide them away from it.” Many bystanders viewed getting the target away from the situation as helpful (n = 11, 31%). Bystanders

suggested not giving attention to the bully, rather getting the person out and away from the harm. One female student (Caucasian, 21) mentioned, “I’d intervene without interacting with the bully. If you see it then involve yourself in a way that doesn't escalate the situation or isn't communicating with the bully. Focus your attention on the person and getting them out of it.” Another female student (Caucasian, 20) mentioned this as a strategy for bullied targets who were both friends and strangers: “If I knew them, it’d be easier. But if I didn't and it was serious, I’d go up and pretend I do like, ‘Hey how's it going?’ and see if they want to go to the bathroom or something.” Getting the target away from the situation through distraction was noted as a frequent intervention response.

Inclusion. The last target-focused intervention strategy was inclusion (n = 11, 31%), such as including bullied peers in activities. One female student (Caucasian, 20) shared, “With exclusion, I’m like ‘Why don’t we just include them, there’s no harm in that.’ I’d still say something, even if it was something subtle like that.” Participants also mentioned including peers during groupwork. Incorporating multiple methods of communication to promote participation in groupwork was noted as helpful. A female student (African-American, 18) shared, “Shy people do better on digital platforms, so it helps having in-person discussions and online so you can refer back to it. Recognize shy people in the group being excluded, prompt them more, and give different platforms to communicate.” Inclusion strategies were mentioned as particularly helpful for international students. One female student (Asian, 20) asserted, “Online communication is good. It gives time to understand ideas and questions. ESL students have to process everything twice and multiple communication helps understanding. Sometimes the group

keeps going in conversation, but we haven't understood the question." Bystanders mentioned inclusion as a mechanism to curb exclusion in groups.

Situation-focused strategies. The next primary category that emerged regarding students' knowledge of interventions was situation-focused strategies. Five secondary categories were developed to illustrate responses focused on mitigating the bully or situation. First, bystanders identified direct confrontation as a strategy (*n* = 26, 72%), followed by involving others or reporting it (*n* = 24, 67%). The third most mentioned strategy was recording the bullying situation to offer the target afterward (*n* = 14, 39%). The next strategy reported was distracting the bully (*n* = 11, 31%), then ignoring the bullying situation (*n* = 9, 25%; see Table 13).

Confrontation. Bystanders identified direct confrontation as a strategy (*n* = 26, 72%). Whereas some students viewed confrontation as effective (*n* = 7, 19%), others viewed confrontation as unhelpful (*n* = 10, 28%). Confrontation was seen as effective for relational bullying, whereas confrontation was seen as unhelpful for stranger situations. A female participant (Caucasian, 18) noted, "If they're talking about someone behind their back you can say, 'I know you're talking about this person and that's not okay.' They'll listen because you're their friend and no one likes being called out for talking crap." Another female student (Caucasian, 18) shared, "I'd calmly say, 'Do you know if that's true or is it your first impression of not liking them? Maybe get to know them on a deeper level.' It's easier to step in for someone you know well and can say good things about." Confrontation was identified as a useful strategy for relational bullying.

Confrontation was also viewed as potentially ineffective, as it could put the bystander at risk of harm. One female student (Asian, 23) shared, "Direct intervention

with a stranger is the unsafest. You're putting yourself on the spot and you don't know what's going to happen next. You don't know them or how they behave." Confrontation could escalate the situation, especially with strangers. Confronting strangers was also seen as challenging because the bystander could not accurately defend the target. A female student (Caucasian, 19) explained, "It's harder to step in if you saw people talking about someone you don't know, you don't know them and their relationship. It's harder because they could be like, 'Why are you stepping in, do you even know them or me?'" Confrontation in situations involving strangers was commonly viewed as unhelpful.

Report it or involve others. Bystanders identified reporting the bullying or involving other authority figures as a response (n = 24, 67%). However, most participants said that reporting bullying was ineffective (n = 17, 47%) compared to effective (n = 4, 11%). A few students said that threatening to report an incident or fake reporting it would better diffuse a situation than actually reporting it. A female student (Caucasian, 21) shared, "When you intervene, discuss other authoritative powers to disrupt the power imbalance. So say you saw somebody getting bullied in the dorm you could be like, 'I'm gonna make this known to the CA, you need to stop.' If you cite other authorities or say I'm gonna call the police that usually stops it." A male student (African-American, 19) elaborated, "Or say the police are on their way. Yeah that'll break things up." Threatening to report bullying, rather than actually reporting bullying per se, was seen as a useful response. Albeit, most participants viewed reporting bullying as unhelpful.

Barriers to report bullying. Bystanders identified six barriers to report bullying. First, many participants did not know who to contact (n = 20, 56%). Also, several students would not report bullying perceived as insignificant (n = 13, 36%), nor thought

reporting would help (*n* = 11, 31%). Next, several bystanders thought that their bullied peers should handle situations on their own (*n* = 10, 28%) or that they may not know the people involved (*n* = 8, 22%), making them unlikely to report. Some students wanted the consent and help from bullied peers to report, rather than report it alone (*n* = 5, 14%).

Many students were unsure whether the college had a bullying policy and of proper reporting protocols (*n* = 20, 56%). A female student (Caucasian, 18) shared, "I honestly have no idea where I would report it." One male participant (Caucasian, 20) agreed, "Nobody's talked to me about bullying. I don't know what to do or where to go if it happened. It's prevalent in college, so we should know where to go and that we can talk to people about it together." Another barrier to reporting bullying was the perception that the bullying situation was not sufficiently serious to involve others (*n* = 13, 36%). A female student (Caucasian, 21) shared, "If it wasn't sufficient, I'd feel dumb reporting it. I don't even know who to contact. Maybe if the syllabus was just rattled off. But if I saw something in the hall right now, I wouldn't know, maybe a professor in class?" Two common barriers for students to report bullying was a lack of knowledge of whom to contact and the perception of bullying as insufficient to involve others.

Several students mentioned that reporting bullying to authority figures would not help (*n* = 11, 31%). One female student (Asian, 24) shared, "What will they do? When I see students getting bullied in groups like, maybe I'll tell the professor, but they'll say, 'Oh you have group projects in life. This is just a part of life.' They won't do anything." Several bystanders recalled experiences when ineffective help was provided from authority figures in the past, so they were reluctant to involve others in the future. A female student (African-American, 18) said, "You're discouraged to say something if you

see no action taken. For my friend who told the CA to find solutions, she got nothing, so what's the point? The university is discouraging to cases being brought up." A few participants recounted ineffective help received about bullying in the dorms. A female respondent (Caucasian, 19) recalled, "I'm in a LGBTQ LLC and people misgendered others so we talked to a CA who said, 'You have to tell them to stop.' This is what our floor stands for and the fact that she didn't back us up then, like we won't talk to her anymore." Some bystanders would not report bullying if friends were involved. One female participant (Caucasian, 19) claimed, "It's hard if it's happening in your friend group. If I'm like 'I'm gonna call the CAs on you for being mean,' they're gonna be like, 'Yeah whatever'."

Moreover, a few students suggested that college students should handle bullying on their own (n = 10, 28%). A male participant (Asian, 19) noted, "Me reporting it would increase the bullying like, 'Oh you had someone else resolve your problems. You couldn't yourself?' You have to deal with it yourself, we're adults." Some students also wanted the consent and help from the victimized peer for reporting bullying, rather than report it on their own (n = 5, 14%). As one female student (Caucasian, 20) put it, "You may not know whether the person wants it reported. I'd talk to the person like, 'Do you need help? Do you want it reported? We could do it together.'" Some bystanders wanted permission from bullied peers to report the situation. Although reporting bullying and involving other authority figures was commonly identified as an intervention, there were many reasons why student bystanders would not report it.

Record the situation. Bystanders identified recording the bullying incident as an intervention strategy (n = 14, 39%). A female respondent (Asian, 20) said, "There's a lot

of racist encounters filmed especially in public spaces. It'd be useful filming in that aspect." Many students mentioned recording bullying as an effective response (*n* = 12, 33%), as long as the video was offered to the target afterward for evidence and discarded if not. A male participant (Asian, 22) shared, "I'm not capable and brave enough to intervene. But, I can record it and when it's over, console the victim like, 'Are you okay? I have a video if you want or I can delete it. If you need witness, I can help.'" For bystanders with low intervention self-efficacy, documenting the incident to offer as proof for the target was a possible way they could help. A female participant (African-American, 21) noted, "You can record it if you can't intervene. But, the person can think, 'Why am I not getting helped? Why are you videotaping?' So help the person if you can and maybe record but only for them to take action against the bully." Recording the bullying incident was often described as a safe intervention strategy.

Distraction and ignorance. Although to a lesser extent, distracting the bully (*n* = 11, 31%) and ignoring the situation (*n* = 9, 25%) were noted as strategies. Distracting the bully, especially among friends, was noted as a response. One female student (Caucasian, 18) mentioned, "When I hear something I'd steer the conversation away or if it keeps happening be like, 'Let's talk about something else. I'm not interested or it's not nice.'" Ignoring the situation was also mentioned as a possible response to bullying. A female respondent (Asian, 21) asserted, "It takes more effort to stop and say something than ignore it and move on. It also puts you at risk. Sometimes you just ignore it." Some students were inclined to ignore relational bullying, especially when the target was unaware of it. As one female student (Caucasian, 18) put it, "When it's gossip and the person's not there, you're not gonna go run and be like let me help you, because they

don't even know what's going on. It's easier to ignore it in those situations." Distraction and ignorance were two possible situation-focused bystander responses to bullying.

The prior results were presented as isolated responses, yet many students illustrated a systematic approach to interventions involving multiple types of strategies. One female respondent (African-American, 21) stated, "I'd verbalize what the bully's doing wrong and tell them to stay away from the target. They might not stop but they'll see people's consciousness of what they're doing. Then comfort the person, walk them away, and tell them it isn't their fault." Bystander interventions to bullying were often described as enacting simultaneous target- and situation-focused responses. Moreover, bystanders have different methods of intervention, as a female student (Asian, 24) mentioned, "I noticed we have different goals for helping the bullied person. You focused on resiliency, she focused on their emotional well-being, and I focused on their physical well-being, like removing them from the situation." Bullying interventions were likely a function of the bystander's goals and abilities.

Education. Participants were asked if they received any bullying education during college. More than half of the students (n = 21, 58%) reported that they received no information about bullying while in college. Some students (n = 13, 36%) recalled completing an online module that might have contained information about bullying. Several students (n = 10, 28%) mentioned receiving bullying education during freshman orientation, whereas a few students (n = 8, 22%) recalled bullying information on course syllabi. Most students did not receive education about bullying, and for those students who did mention receiving education, they were often unsure if it was specific to bullying (see Table 14).

Many college students did not recall receiving information about bullying. One female participant (Caucasian, 20) shared, “I didn't realize this, but in high school there’s a lot of, ‘When you see bullying, step in. Talk to someone if you’re bullied.’ As soon as we got to college it doesn't exist anymore. I haven't had one conversation about bullying here.” Several students were unaware if the college had a bullying policy. A female respondent (African-American, 21) said, “I didn't know you had a policy. I thought it was an unspoken rule, the same way you can’t show up to class drunk. Is there a policy on bullying?” Another male student (Caucasian, 18) noted, “I assume there's somewhere that says you can't bully, but in sophisticated language. But I’ve never seen it and don't know the extent of it.” Many students reported that they did not receive bullying education during college.

Effective bullying education. Participants were asked what they perceived as effective methods to educate students about bullying. First, students identified a group discussion format as useful (n = 19, 53%). Second, students mentioned integrating education into class syllabi, in addition to activities throughout the semester (n = 14, 28%). Third, students mentioned providing general bullying education (i.e., definition, policy, consequences, resources; n = 13, 36%). Many students (n = 13, 36%) found factual case studies of bullying incidents as advantageous, as well as role-play opportunities to practice interventions (n = 10, 28%). Having a required yearly online module, especially for transfer students, was seen as helpful (n = 9, 25%), in addition to a freshman introductory class covering the topic (n = 9, 25%). Last, several students (n = 8, 22%) said posting education in bathroom stalls would spread awareness (see Table 14).

Group-based discussions. First, students (n = 19, 53%) suggested implementing a program involving a group discussion format, similar to what the current study used. For instance, one female student (Caucasian, 21) said, "For education it should include ways to talk about bullying in a platform like this with other people." Participants identified several beneficial outcomes for their involvement in the focus groups. First, several students felt more aware of peer interactions in their environments (n = 13, 36%). As a female student (African-American, 24) put it, "It was weird right after the session we had, I was actually more aware of noticing it and just like general interactions people have around campus." One male student (Caucasian, 21) noted, "Yeah talking about this, like, now I am more aware of it for sure. We just need to know these things exist to be more aware." Participants found the exchange of stories with their peers as informative. A female participant (African-American, 18) asserted, "The more you speak about events seen on campus, even with people in this setting now, like I've learned so much more about what kinds of bullying take place that I wasn't aware of before." Some students found the discussion format as an engaging method to learn about interventions. A female student (Caucasian, 18) noted, "If it's online, I won't give it full effort. I'd have to be discussion based, something like this, or where you address parts of bullying and situational stuff rather than saying, 'This is bullying, here's the definition, good luck, bye.'" Group discussions about bullying were seen as beneficial.

In addition to being more aware of peer interactions, some students realized they engaged in bullying behaviors towards others (n = 7, 19%). One female student (African-American, 20) noted, "I'd say mean things on Snapchat about them. I said something really mean, I wow. It's easy to retaliate when someone's being mean. Was I like, did I

turn into a bully? I probably did, but never thought about it." Another female student (Caucasian, 21) shared, "There's experiences I've had with bullying, but one I kind of participated in, I guess, which I realize now was really mean." Furthermore, some participants realized they were bullied (n = 6, 36%). A female student (Asian, 21) said, "You said something that made me rethink my freshman year. I wasn't included in a lot of stuff. I never thought it was bullying, but I still think about how it hurts now." Several students realized they were previously bullied due to participation in the focus groups.

A few students realized they were both bullied and bullied others. A male participant (Asian, 23) recalled, "Listening to your stories, I feel like there's bullying I've witnessed that I didn't consider. Which I guess is the point of this exercise, but I've been on both ends. There times I was left out and times I left out people." A female student (Asian, 19) realized several outcomes from the group discussions: "This made me reflect on my past experiences and allowed me to realize instances in which I was being bullied, where I was the bully, and where my friends were bullies and I stood by passively." Involvement in the group discussion allowed some students to realize their own participation in bullying. Given these important recognitions, future research implementing a similar educational method employed by this study could have beneficial results for other student bystanders.

Classroom integration. Many students said incorporating bullying curriculum into relevant courses (n = 14, 28%), yearly online modules (n = 9, 25%), and freshmen introductory courses (n = 9, 25%). The types of curriculum identified as helpful included general bullying education (n = 13, 36%), case studies (n = 13, 36%), and role-plays (n = 10, 28%; see Table 14). Some participants noted the importance of educators to

incorporate a meaningful strategy in classrooms to inform students about resources. One female student (Caucasian, 20) recalled, “They just have a brief description on their syllabus. No one reads that stuff.” A female student (Caucasian, 21) agreed, “I know, I always get frustrated.” Only reiterating syllabus content was not seen as a helpful way to educate students about resources. A female student (Caucasian, 20) stated,

> When teachers talk about resources on the syllabus, I get angry because it seems like something they just need to check off their list. We’d have a more constructive in-person conversation about how to actually step it. Not this robotic voice telling me examples and asking how to handle it, like the online modules.

Including bullying education into classrooms or required courses were viewed as effective, often because students were more attentive and accountable. A male student (Caucasian, 21) stated, “Doing stuff in person is better than online. It’s pretty anonymous so it doesn’t connect to you as much. When you’re in a classroom you feel accountable.” Freshman entry courses were seen as effective places for education. One female student (Caucasian, 19) said, “A class would be effective if it’s a required across-the-board class every freshman had to take.” Another female participant (Caucasian, 18) elaborated, “It should be implemented in college intro courses. I know for CLA there’s a one-week module, but it's basic PowerPoint stuff that's brushed over. But that is a perfect place, right as you enter college.” A female student (Asian, 18) shared, “Have it in a first-year course, like one of the weeks could be about bullying. If we're forced to do it, we'll get something out of it.” Some students felt more accountability for coursework, so involving bullying curriculum in relevant classes was seen as helpful.

Students also felt that including bullying curriculum into classrooms would create better atmospheres. A female student (Asian, 18) noted, "I know it's not the professor's job, but at the same time they're educators. To have five minutes to teach them something about bullying will make the class dynamic better too." Taking *five minutes* out of class during the semester was mentioned by several students in various focus groups. A female student (Caucasian, 20) said,

> Having a professor take five minutes out of their lecture would be good. So it's not taking time out of the students who aren't gonna go to events and look at emails. A lot of people don't know and something as simple as five minutes at the beginning of lecture could do a lot for somebody who needed it. Just talk about different topics and resources during the semester.

Another female student (Caucasian, 21) noted, "A better way to reach students is like once a week, teachers do a five-minute session in class. Like, here's a hypothetical situation and how you should go about it or let's talk to this psychologist about it. That's helpful because students are already paying attention." Incorporating brief class activities or information sessions about student stressors, such as bullying, was noted as an effective educational mechanism.

Participants identified three specific methods to educate students about bullying, namely, general bullying education (definition, policy, reporting, and resources; $n = 12$, 36%), case studies ($n = 13$, 36%), and role-plays ($n = 10$, 28%). First, students mentioned the importance of knowing the college's bullying policies and reporting resources. One male student (African-American, 21) said, "The bullying resources you passed out on the sheet last week, like a lot of people don't know about any of that. I didn't even know that

existed." This student found the policy resources provided during the focus groups as informative. Another female student (Asian, 20) agreed, "Last week when we got the Board of Regents document regarding bullying, that was really useful. I didn't know a lot of the resources that I could go to if there was a bullying incident." Students can benefit from discussing important college policies and resources, such as the student conduct code.

The use of bullying case studies was also seen as an influential strategy. A female respondent (Asian, 23) stated, "If people come out with bullying stories, it would give others the courage to come and speak out about it or stand up for others. Using those as case studies can help know how to respond." One female respondent (Asian, 22) shared, "Using real-life stories of people who've been bullied and how it affected them, like those stories really hit you. If someone says not do something, the chances of people listening are low compared to when you see what the consequences are." College students preferred factual bullying cases as a mechanism for education and prevention. Also, incorporating role-play opportunities for students to practice intervention skills was identified as useful. A female student (Asian, 21) noted, "Anything with roleplay events where students can participate and take part of, they are going to learn and reflect more. Our schedules go by so fast. We don't have time to reflect on things that happen around us." Incorporating bullying policies, case studies, and role-play opportunities into relevant courses were seen as effective educational tools.

Last, posting informative sheets in bathrooms (n = 8, 22%) was mentioned by several participants as an impactful location to educate students. One female student (African-American, 21) said, "The bathroom is a good one. Because you sit there, then

you read the poster. That's super easy and effective." A male participant (Caucasian, 21) agreed, "Yeah, very effective. I know all the posters in the bathrooms. I wished they changed them more." For college personnel considering effective locations for bullying campaigns, less populated and intimate settings, such as bathrooms may be impactful.

Overall, bystanders identified target- and situation-focused intervention strategies to bullying. The target-focused responses include nurturant support, get them away from the situation, inclusion, problem-solve, and improve self-efficacy. Several situation-focused strategies were mentioned, such as confrontation, report the situation, record the incident, distraction, and ignorance. Reporting bullying was commonly indicated as an intervention, yet students identified many barriers to report bullying. Many students did not receive any bullying education while in college. However, participants offered several strategies that colleges can implement to educate students about bullying.

BIM step 5: Intention to intervene. The last research question from the focus groups asked, "What do students say about how they would intervene in bullying?" Three primary categories emerged to illustrate how peer bystanders make sense of their intentions to intervene, including *Location Factors*, *Bully Factors,* and *Other Bystander Factors.*

Location factors. Characteristics about the bullying location influenced bystanders' intervention decisions. Three secondary categories surfaced that illustrate aspects about the location that influenced intervention decisions. First, online bullying had a great impact on bystanders' decisions to implement interventions (n = 16, 48%). Second, bullying that happened in public places increased bystanders' intention to intervene (n = 15, 42%), whereas bullying that occurred at night decreased bystanders'

intention to help (*n* = 13, 36%). Last, bystanders were more inclined to intervene on behalf of friends who bullied in private settings as a mechanism to save face (*n* = 7, 19%; see Table 15).

Online. The implementation of intervention efforts depended on whether the bullying was online (*n* = 16, 48%). Most participants were less likely to intervene for online bullying (*n* = 12, 33%). However, a few participants found it easier to intervene online (*n* = 4, 11%). For many students, it was easier to avoid or not attend to online bullying cues. One male student (Caucasian, 21) shared, "It's easier to distance yourself from it online. I can lock my phone and it goes away. But if you're walking down the street and people are going at it behind you, you can't turn it off, you're still in it." A female bystander (Caucasian, 20) elaborated, "It's hard to notice online unless I can see or hear it. There's bullying with comments, but you gotta scroll through and read what everybody's saying. It's one of those things I know is there, but I don't take time to look at it." Cyberbullying was such a common experience for some bystanders that it became normalized. A female bystander (Asian, 20) revealed, "Cyberbullying has become more prevalent and you see it so much that you're not sure whether it is of the same caliber as physical bullying you see in front of you." Online bullying can be easier to disengage from as a bystander.

Some bystanders identified less urgency to intervene in online bullying situations compared to offline incidents. A female student (Asian, 19) shared, "There is less urgency on social media, because if you see it in person you have to do something like now. But online it's been up for a few days so what does it matter if I say something now." Other students thought bullied peers can better defend themselves online than

offline, thus their help was needed less. A female participant (African-American, 24) disclosed, “For online bullying, it's more of a personal responsibility for the target to do something, because they have more control to reply to the person.” Bystanders expressed less immediate concern and risk for online bullying, making them less inclined to intervene.

Several bystanders mentioned that online interventions carried more risk of retaliation. One female student (Caucasian, 19) noted, “The thing about online bullying is even if you say something you suddenly are in it. It's online so your response is permanent then they attack you too.” A female participant (African-American, 21) shared, “It’s really time-consuming, ‘cause once you start defending someone under a post then the bullies respond to you. If you're not backing down, it's endless responses.” Given the possible risk of retaliation, some bystanders were more inclined for private versus public online interventions. A female respondent (Caucasian, 21) said, “I wouldn’t do anything online. Maybe I’d report it to someone internally but definitely not get in the middle of it.” Another female bystander (Caucasian, 19) agreed, “If you are supporting someone online it'd be a private message, not a public post.” Online public interventions created safety concerns for bystanders, making them less inclined to help online.

To a lesser extent, a few students suggested intervening online was easier than offline (n = 4, 11%). A female student (Caucasian, 19) shared, “It’s easier to do online because it's through a screen. You're not confronting someone in person. You can report a comment as bullying, so you're not pointed out as the person that confronted them.” Some bystanders with low self-efficacy for in-person interventions felt better able to help online. A female bystander (African-American, 24) said, “It's a personal responsibility

for cyberbullying to the person being targeted to do something about it, because they have no control over what other people reply." This participant felt more inclined for online interventions, as the target had less control over others' responses.

Public and night. Bullying situations in public setting increased bystanders' intention to intervene (n = 15, 42%). One male student (African-American, 19) said, "If it's later at night on the street I feel less inclined because it puts me at harm. If it's during the day in public, I'll feel more inclined." A female student (Caucasian, 22) shared, "It depends on the situation, the location. Like at a bar or something I'd get in the way more because there's other people around compared to at night walking on the street." Another female participant (Asian, 24) stated, "When he says things like all Muslims are sexist, then I'll intervene. Especially if we're in public and he's going to start to turn to other people." A bullying situation in a public setting increased bystanders' intention to intervene.

Bystanders were also less likely to implement an intervention when bullying occurred at night (n = 13, 36%), often due to concerns about personal safety. A female student (Asian, 19) claimed, "If the situation were to happen at night, I'd be wary of intervening for the sake of my own safety." Another female participant (Asian, 22) agreed, "If there's something happening late at night, I'm more concerned about getting home safely than intervening." One female respondent (Asian, 20) suggested that the college's timely warning system affected their intention to help during evening events: "The timely warnings from the university happen at night when no one's on campus. If I was alone walking somewhere and see bullying, I won't intervene at night. I'd be

concerned for my own safety." If a bullying situation occurred at night, bystanders were less inclined to intervene.

Private setting for friends who bully. Another location characteristic that affected interventions was when the bullying was enacted by friends. Some bystanders would not intervene in public while the friend bullied but would instead wait until they were in a private setting (n = 7, 19%). One female student (Asian, 20) noted, "If my friend is bullying others, I will calm them down. After the situation, I will talk to them and say it's not right and give advice." A female participant (African-American, 18) illustrated how the setting influenced interventions with friends: "In the situation I wouldn't intervene. But after say, 'What's going on? Why'd you feel like doing that?' Then work through the problem, like 'this is what I saw and why it's not okay.' Rather than embarrassing them and hurting our friendship." For bystanders witnessing their friends bullying others, intervening after the situation in a private setting was seen as most helpful to save face and enact change.

Bully factors. Participants mentioned characteristics about the bully that affected their intervention decisions. First, if the bully escalated the situation, such as with physical aggression or weapons, bystanders were less inclined to respond (n = 13, 36%). Second, if the bully was in a group and numerically superior, bystanders were less likely to intervene (n = 11, 31%). The bully's gender (n = 9, 25%), alcohol consumption (n = 8, 22%), physical size (n = 7, 19%), and race/ethnicity (n = 6, 17%) also affected interventions (see Table 15).

Escalation/weapons. If the bully escalated the aggression or involved weapons, many bystanders would not intervene (n = 13, 36%). A female student (Asian, 19) noted,

"A bullying situation in which I would not intervene would be if physical violence was happening." One male participant (Caucasian, 20) claimed, "If it was night and I was alone and there was physical violence or weapons, I wouldn't do anything. I'd maybe call someone, but I wouldn't step in. I'd be afraid to get hurt." Another female participant (Caucasian, 20) asserted, "It'd be scary if it were at night and I was by myself and it got violent. I'm not sure how I would step in safely then." Safety concerns for escalation decreased bystanders' intervention implementation decisions.

Group size. Participants were less likely to implement interventions if the bully was in a group and numerically superior (n = 11, 31%). A female bystander (Asian, 21) asserted, "The biggest factor for me not intervening is if they're in a group and I'm out-numbered. If I have other people with me that are willing to help stop them and speak up, then I'd with them." A male student (Asian, 22) had similar concerns, "If there are a bunch of guys, and I am alone, it's many people against a single person, I will not intervene. I might do something else like call someone." Group size influenced bystanders' intention to intervene in bullying.

Gender. The bully's gender affected bystanders' intention to intervene (n = 9, 25%). Participants identified as female indicated gender as a barrier for implementing interventions. A female student (Asian, 22) shared, "It mostly depends on gender. If it's all men, I'm not going to get into the situation. But if it's all female, maybe I can try to talk to them." Another female student (Caucasian, 20) disclosed, "Being a woman, I wouldn't step in a bullying situation with men. That's a huge power differential with gender and size. I'd be more aggressive with men, too." Gender-based power differentials influenced female participants' intention to intervene in situations involving male bullies.

Alcohol. Participants were less inclined to implement interventions in situations involving alcohol (n = 8, 22%). Events or places with the presence of alcohol were perceived as risky for enacting interventions. A female student (Caucasian, 21) recounted, "I wouldn't intervene at an event or place where people are drinking. Things are unpredictable with alcohol. I know people participate in game day activities before events, so I wouldn't intervene there either. Security can deal with that." A male bystander (African-American, 19) agreed, "Alcohol is a factor. One time playing ping pong it was my turn, both of them were drunk and my friend was like 'no it's his turn.' And he's drunk like, 'It's my turn. We can go outside and fight about it.' I'm like 'No, we won't do that.'' The involvement of alcohol in bullying situations prevented bystander interventions.

Size. The physical size of the bully affected bystanders' intention to help (n = 7, 19%). A male student (African-American, 19) shared, "At a house party with two guys fighting, they were both 6'2", bigger than me so I wasn't going to say anything, but they started fighting. I should've done something, but they were so much bigger and it got physical." Being physically smaller than the bully prevented bystander interventions. A female participant (Asian, 22) said, "If the person's older and bigger than me, like I have no power to do anything, they have greater danger. I need to feel my own physical superior power or else it's dangerous." A power differential regarding physical size among the bystander and bully influenced interventions.

Race/ethnicity. The last bully-focused characteristic that influenced bystanders' intention to intervene was racial or ethnic power differentials (n = 7, 19%). If the bully was of a majority race and the bystander was of a minority race, the bystander felt less

inclination to help. A male student (Asian, 22) claimed, “We are foreign here. Maybe in Asian countries I’d intervene, but not here.” One female participant (Asian, 22) stated, “Being an international student even though I feel strongly against White supremacy, I would not speak up against it. I've just come here, so I’m not comfortable.” One female student (African-American, 21) vividly recalled,

> With people who are witnessing aggression in public there's racial aspects if you stand out, like me being black. There are witnesses who paint you in a certain way going off of their preconceived notions. A White person won’t have to care. If I were to it could be perceived as wrong. If the situation got news coverage with a twist of one word or interview from someone who didn't agree, I’m painted in a whole different way and my Somali or Black community is further stereotyped in White communities.

Bystanders were less inclined to help in bullying situations in which they were of the minority race or ethnicity compared to that of the bully.

Other bystander factors. Participants identified characteristics about other bystanders in the situation that affected their intention to intervene. First, a situation involving many other bystanders present (i.e., bystander effect) reduced participants’ intentions to help (n = 24, 67%). Second, participants reported that their intention to intervene increased when other bystanders or friends disapproved of bullying and supported interventions (n = 23, 64%). Last, the presence of a higher authority or someone perceived as more competent and able to manage bullying in the situation reduced participants’ intervention responses (n = 11, 31%; see Table 15).

Bystander effect. The bystander effect was documented among witnesses to peer bullying (n = 24, 67%). Participants were less inclined to implement interventions when many others were present in the situation. One female student (Caucasian, 20) recounted, "If they were strangers and more people around, I'd think, 'Somebody else will step in,' but I'd stick around to see if I need to step in, but would wait for somebody else to make the first move." Bystanders felt a greater need to intervene when fewer people witnessed the bullying. A male student (Caucasian, 19) said, "If there are less people I will be more likely because if I'm not doing it, who is?" Another female participant (Caucasian, 21) shared, "It puts the spotlight on you to intervene. Having more bystanders would not make me want to as much as if it was something I saw alone. With bystanders it's like, 'If I'm not the one doing something than somebody else will.'" Having others around, in addition to other bystanders' lack of action decreased students' intention to help. A female student (Caucasian, 19) recalled, "If I'm coming into the situation, there's other people around and they're not doing anything, I'll assume there's something I don't know." The bystander effect was reported among college students seeing peer bullying.

Support from others. The second characteristic that influenced participants' intention to intervene was whether other bystanders disapproved of the bullying and supported their intervention efforts (n = 23, 64%). A female student (Asian, 21) said, "If I have other people with me that are willing to directly stop them and speak up for the victims, then I'd intervene. If I am out-numbered, then I won't." Having support to intervene in bullying clearly helped the efforts of peer bystanders. Students also observed the responses from other bystanders to discern intervention decisions. A female participant (Asian, 24) disclosed, "When others see it, before someone says something,

people look at each other like, 'Are you seeing this? Do we agree it's wrong? Who's saying something?' It's nonverbal, like eye contact. People read the area and feel out everyone before intervening." Discerning the reactions of other bystanders in the incident propelled intervention responses.

Having the support of friends to intervene increased participants' intentions to help. A female student (Asian, 19) said, "When I am with my friends, I am more likely to intervene as I am inherently supported by their presence, safety in numbers." One male student (Caucasian, 21) shared, "Definitely having like-minded friends, you all perceive the same bad thing, it's easier to act. If one person in my friend group will do it, I'm more likely to." A female student (Asian, 24) agreed, "Friends are more encouraging of that. Whereas when you're witnessing something alone, there's always that question like, 'Is this wrong'? Is it my place?' With a friend, you can bounce ideas off each other." Another female student (Caucasian, 22) noted, "If your friend did something mean then step in and say, 'That's not cool.' And if your other friends agree then that person realizes what they did wasn't nice or could be bullying so then everyone's on the same page." Having support for interventions from other bystanders and friends increased responses.

Higher qualifications. The presence of a bystander perceived as having higher qualifications or competencies affected bystander responses (n = 11, 31%). If a bystander was aware that someone with greater ability to intervene was in the situation, they were less likely to respond. A female student (Caucasian, 21) noted, "In the classroom I'd expect the professor to intervene if they decided it was bullying, their higher authority." Classroom interventions were challenging, given the power differentials. One female student (African-American, 18) shared, "In those situations, I'm like, okay there has to be

a senior or junior here who will do something. They probably know more about what to do than me and the resources. Unlike me a freshman, I know less about it." Age differentials affected perceptions of intervention ability, thus influencing some bystander responses. Another female student (Caucasian, 21) mentioned, "I wouldn't intervene at a sporting event or place with security that can better step in." Power differentials among bystanders present in bullying situations influenced students' intervention decisions.

Overall, three factors influenced bystanders' intention to intervene. First, the location affected bystander responses, including whether the bullying was online, in pubic, at night, or in a private setting for friends who bully. Next, bullies had several power resources that influenced bystander interventions, such as group and physical size, gender, alcohol compensation, and race or ethnicity. Last, other bystanders in the situation affected responses, namely having many others present, support from others, and higher authorities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Discussion

This dissertation used mixed-methods research to pursue three goals. First, informed by the Bystander Intervention Model (BIM), focus groups with college-student bystanders were conducted to explore their experiences and perspectives of witnessing peer bullying. The second goal of the study was to assess a bystander intervention aimed at educating and encouraging students to support bullied peers. Last, students evaluated 28 bystander responses that varied along three dimensions: 1) *helpful* to *unhelpful*, 2) *safe* to *unsafe*, and 3) *direct* to *indirect*. The next section overviews this project's findings, implications, limitations, and future directions.

Focus group data. Bystanders' experiences and perspectives about peer bullying interventions were explored. The focus groups were organized around the steps in the BIM to assess students' 1) experiences of seeing bullying, 2) interpretations of harm, 3) motivations for helping, 4) knowledge of intervention strategies, and 5) perceptions of intervention decisions. The qualitative data contribute to theoretical understandings of the BIM by offering rich and descriptive stories from bystanders about college bullying. Knowing these stories is important, as Lawler (2002) argues, "It is through such stories that we make sense of the world, of our relationship to that world, and of the relationship between ourselves and other selves" (p. 249). Understanding how students described the bullying process helps to contextualize, enrich, and augment current survey-based research. This analysis uncovers how bystanders communicatively construct their bullying experiences, as well as their cognitive processes. These interpretations identify

the range of possibilities and difficulties bystanders encounter when making intervention decisions.

BIM: Step 1. Bystanders identified five cues used to recognize bullying. First, the target's expressions of hurt feelings indicated bullying. Bystanders noticed targets' negative emotions, closed body language, fake laughing, isolation and distance, and requests for help as indicative of hurt feelings. Second, bystanders identified a power imbalance in a situation as an indicator of bullying, such as the target being unable to defend themselves, or superior physical or group size. Third, students identified the exhibition of verbally or physically aggressive behaviors as informative of bullying. Fourth, bystanders described bullying as involving intent to harm, such that the attack was unprovoked or unwanted by the target. The last cue to noticing bullying was the repetition or severity of behaviors.

Recall the four criteria used to conceptualize bullying, namely aggression, intent to harm, power imbalance, and repetition or severity. Students also perceived bullying as involving these four characteristics, yet most often identified hurt feelings as a separate, unique definitional factor. Although not explicitly stated in most definitions of bullying, there is overriding agreement that bullying creates distress, ranging from mild to severe (Olweus, 1993). Prior research revealed that children and young adults include distress as a component of their bullying definitions (Goldsmid & Howie, 2014). This study contributes to that literature by illustrating that college students also utilized distress as an element of bullying. The absence of distress in definitions of bullying may be due the subjective nature of such judgments and the challenges of applying the criterion in

research (Rigby, 1997). It is perhaps useful for college interventions to address this characteristic as a mechanism for students to better identify peer bullying incidents.

A contribution of the current study is the identification of barriers to recognize bullying among peers. Prior research documented barriers for bystanders to notice cyberbullying incidents (Jones & Savage, 2018), yet the participants in this study largely focused on barriers to noticing in-person bullying incidents. Students identified the following barriers to recognizing college bullying: not paying attention, distracted with past or upcoming events, preoccupied with technology, and maintaining public distance norms. Many students described mindless activities they engaged in while navigating around campus, making them less likely to see bullying among peers. Students were often preoccupied with cellphones and listening to music, which diminished their ability to notice bullying. Maintaining public distance norms with strangers was another barrier, such as keeping physical distance and avoiding eye contact. For campaign efforts seeking to increase student awareness of bullying, clearly defining bullying and expressing caution about barriers to noticing aggressive incidents on campus would be productive. This is useful for students to not only notice bullying, but also to preserve their own safety to aggressive incidents in their environments.

Bystanders described various bullying situations they observed in college. First, students saw the following types of bullying (in order of most to least frequently reported): denigration, exclusion, online, and to a lesser extent, verbal, peer pressure, and physical. Second, students observed bullying in the following locations: class, text or group messages, dorms, social media, parties, and campus streets. Third, bystanders said the following people were involved in bullying: friends, groupmates, roommates, team or

clubmates, classmates, and strangers. Last, students identified the focus of attack they observed in bullying situations. Bystanders saw peers being targeted about their race or ethnicity, appearance or clothing, competencies, gender, age, social status, sexual orientation, and to a lesser extent, disclosure violation, drinking, weight, and disability.

The synthesized data of bystanders' stories revealed several trends. Similar to participants in prior research (MacDonald & Roberts-Pittman, 2010; You & Bellmore, 2014), college students were more likely to witness indirect bullying compared to direct. Relational forms of bullying were especially evident in the stories of bystanders, including passive, subtle, and hidden aggression. Many students expressed awareness about the legal repercussions for adults involved in direct aggression. In fact, many college students perceive physical fights as risky and pointless (Twenge, 2017). This is likely a reason why bystanders observed less direct bullying in college, as bullies were aware about the consequences. Next, bystanders observed many incidents of relational bullying in dorms with roommates. Unfortunately, many bystanders described receiving insufficient help from community advisors when they reported bullying in dorms. Colleges should especially focus on preventing bullying in dorms, as well as on improving response efforts to reports of incidents.

Bystanders also depicted bullying situations in classrooms. A few bystanders observed verbal bullying during class lecture, often times when a classmate asked a question or made a comment. Yet, most of the bullying observed in classrooms occurred during group work. Students described seeing exclusion and ganging up on a peer in groups. Often times, international students faced the brunt of bullying during groupwork. Many international students were observed being excluded or ignored during class.

Overall, bystanders described bullying as indirect and relational, occurring in friend or peer groups, and in familiar locations (e.g., class, dorms).

BIM: Step 2. Students talked about how they interpreted harm in bullying situations. Bystanders identified five aspects of bullying perceived as especially hurtful. First, relational bullying that involved spreading rumors and gossip was seen as most harmful. The lack of control over the information shared and inability to defend oneself against the attacks made relational bullying damaging. Also, bystanders were aware that different types of bullying affected people differently, which was why they mentioned focusing on the target's well-being as a mechanism to interpret harm. For instance, a bystander might perceive a verbal bullying incident as hurtful and as requiring help, yet a target is unaffected by the incident. Paying attention to whether and how bullying negatively affected the target's well-being, as well as other important aspects of their life (e.g., school, work) indicated harm to peer bystanders.

Students identified situations that involved large audiences as painful, especially cyberbullying, due to its vast scope and permanence. Bullying that resulted in social ramifications was seen as harmful, such as finding out a friend bullied you or your social status among peers was at risk. Bystanders also identified students new to the college at particular risk of harm for victimization. This included freshman, as well as students from out of the state or country. Because new students are still transitioning into college life and unfamiliar with the area, they may experience added consequences when bullied.

Bystanders noted a few barriers to identifying hurtful bullying among peers. A clear issue with bystander interventions was that students were not confident that what they witnessed was really bullying that warranted their intervention. Part of a bullying

intervention should address how to know bullying when they see it. First, there was uncertainty in knowing whether an aggressive situation was provoked or involved retaliation. Particularly among strangers, it could be challenging to identify bullying roles in a situation, due to ambiguity about the motivations behind the attacks. Overall, when bystanders perceive someone's behavior as provocative or inappropriate, they tend to blame the target, experience less empathy, and decline to help (Schacter et al., 2016; Thornberg et al., 2012; Weber et al., 2013). Bystanders also expressed uncertainty in distinguishing between bullying situations versus friends "messing around." Especially in unfamiliar situations, it can be difficult to understand the intent behind aggression (e.g., friendly banter or words meant to harm).

The last barrier to interpreting harm was whether a situation involved bullying or conflict among peers. Past research documented the challenges for peer bystanders to differentiate among conflict or *drama* episodes and bullying. Drama was a particularly evoked gendered term used by women when talking about how they interpret situations as harmful. In general, young adults use the term drama when discussing hostile interactions of a less serious manner (Sumner, Brody, & Ramirez, 2018). A key difference among conflict or drama episodes and bullying is that one situation involves reciprocal hostility, whereas the other situation does not. Conflict or drama episodes involve the reciprocal exchange of hostile messages from both parties involved, whereas bullying involves a power imbalance, such that targets are unable to defend themselves. Conflict is inevitable and even beneficial for young adults, whereas bullying is preventable and consequential (Sumner et al., 2018). However, some peer experiences can begin as drama, yet spiral into bullying when the behaviors persist, and one person

becomes unable to equally respond and consequently experiences detrimental outcomes. This distinction is important, and worthy of attention and education for students. This can help bystanders better interpret inequitable bullying situations in need of intervention, as well as appropriate intervention responses given the type of peer interaction. It is also of interest to further explore how student bystanders speak in codes (e.g., drama) to interpret risky situations and normalize behaviors (e.g., relational aggression).

BIM: Step 3. Internal and external motivations for peer bullying interventions were identified. Bystanders who were previously bullied and identified with why the victim was targeted (e.g., a woman seeing another woman being bullied about gender) expressed greater empathy and intent to help. This finding is consistent with prior literature documenting bystanders' prior bullying experience and empathy as strong predictors of helping bullied peers (Nickerson et al., 2014; Wozencroft et al., 2015). Bystanders who were previously bullied tend to share with and relate to the feelings of observed targets, thus motivating interventions.

However, bystanders also assessed their personal safety. Consistent with past research (Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005; Rigby & Johnson, 2005; Thornberg et al., 2012), situations perceived as putting the bystander at risk reduced motivations. Students in the current study particularly feared physical harm, retaliation, and losing student or immigration status. Participants understood that attempts at intervention or consolation can be met with additional aggression or repercussions aimed at them. Also, many bystanders were aware of their skills and abilities to successfully intervene in bullying. Students' perception of high self-efficacy propelled bullying interventions, whereas perceptions of low self-efficacy reduced motivations to help. Bystanders are more likely

to intervene in bullying when they feel capable and have the necessary resources to help (Pöyhönen et al., 2012; Thornberg & Jungert, 2013). Clearly, bystanders select a mode of intervention based on how effective they perceive their possible actions to be.

The last internal motivation mentioned by bystanders was morals. Some students were motivated to intervene in bullying because of their moral obligations and values, such that it was the *right thing* to do. Similar results were found in the case of bystander responses to cyberbullying. Jones and Savage (2018) found that college students envisioned their bystander responses as largely dependent on their maturity and moral development that "comes with age." Many participants in this study compared their motivations and intervention responses from the perspective of being in middle or high school to their current perspective in college.

Bystanders also identified external motivations for interventions. The bystander's relationship with the target had the greatest influence on helping behavior, which aligns with prior studies about online (Brody & Vangelisti, 2016) and offline bullying (Chaux, 2005; Oh & Hazler, 2009). Bystanders identified relational expectations and reciprocity as factors motivating them to help close others. Roles reversed, bystanders expected that their friends would defend them under similar circumstances. Prior research supports the norm of reciprocity for bystander helping behavior. Individuals are more inclined to help those who can offer help in return and offering help can increase one's status and reputation among group members (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). Just as the bystander's relationship with the target motivated interventions, their relationship with the bully also affected motivations. Many college student bystanders would intervene on behalf of their friends who bullied due to relational expectations and fear of

repercussions for their friends. Research on middle and high school students finds that bystanders are less likely to intervene in situations when they are relationally close to the bully (Chaux, 2005; Levine et al., 2002; Oh & Hazler, 2009). It might be the case that college students feel greater ability to intervene on behalf of friends who bully. However, there were also a notable number of college student bystanders who feared intervention with a friend who bullied due to damaging the relationship. Clearly, self-efficacy and perceived relational consequences influence bystander interventions to relationally-close bullying situations.

The incident's degree of severity influenced bystander interventions. Many bystanders suggested, regardless of their fear for hurting their relationship with the perpetrator or intervening in stranger situations, severe bullying that clearly hurt the target would propel them to intervene somehow. The more severe the bullying situation, the less ambiguity there is for bystanders to interpret intent to harm (Jones & Savage, 2018). Thus, bystanders were motivated to intervene in situations seen as severe among strangers or friends. More often, severity referred to the aggression itself. Participants considered making fun of or exclusion as less severe. Situations perceived as severe included when the target was aware of the bullying and experienced negative outcomes (e.g., crying), as well as direct forms of victimization (e.g., physical assault). Bystanders likely model their judgment and response in proportion to the severity of the incident, as a mechanism to act most appropriately (Jones & Savage, 2018).

The last external motivator for bystander interventions was uncontrollable attributions for the attack. That is, bystanders were motivated to intervene in situations in which the target was attacked for uncontrollable aspects (e.g., race) compared to

controllable (e.g., clothing). Seeing bullying targeted at race, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or gender were mentioned by bystanders as motivating interventions. Many student bystanders in the current study were Gen Zers, the most racially and ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history. Gen Zers show great awareness and concern about inequality and justice (Rue, 2018). Many college students in this study were motivated to intervene in bullying situations involving prejudice and racism. Research also documents that bullying disproportionately affects marginalized groups, including students with disabilities, who identify as LGBTQ (National School Climate Survey, 2013) or of a minority race, ethnicity, and religion (Russell, Sinclair, Poteat, & Koening, 2012). Students targeted with bias-based bullying experience particularly negative consequences compared to those students who do not (Russell et al., 2012). This is likely because the bullied targets make uncontrollable attributions for victimization, such that they are bullied about something that they are unable to change about themselves (Danielson & Emmers-Sommer, 2016). Given these factors, it is clear why bystanders were particularly motivated to intervene in bullying situations involving discriminatory harassment.

BIM: Step 4. Students revealed their comprehension of intervention strategies, as well as the sources of their bullying knowledge. Bystanders identified two types of intervention strategies, namely target- and situation-focused responses. First, bystanders often identified the provision of *nurturant support* (i.e., messages aimed at helping individuals cope with the emotional consequences of a stressor; Cutrona & Russell, 1990). Bystanders described nurturant support as an effective first and initial response to a bullying situation to improve the target's emotional well-being and confidence.

Moreover, the provision of nurturant support *alone* was not viewed as helpful. Bystanders suggested that it was necessary to follow nurturant aid with informational support (i.e., messages that offer facts, guidance, or advice; Cutrona & Suhr, 1992), such as problem-solving and improving targets' self-efficacy to manage bullying. This would allow the bullied targets to work through their feelings, as well as think through options to remediate the issue. Prior research indicates the importance of emotional support primacy in supportive messages about bullying, as well as receiving multiple support types to manage distressing emotions and bullying situations (Danielson & Youngvorst, 2018). One study found that bullied students preferred emotional support first, followed by network support from college instructors (Danielson & Jones, 2018). It is likely the case that bullied students expect support aimed at improving their emotional states, in addition to support aimed at mitigating the actual problem.

Bystanders also suggested removing the bullied target away from the situation. This was perceived as a useful strategy for targets who were both friends and strangers. Changing the topic or asking whether the target wanted to walk somewhere were identified as communication strategies to get victims away from the bullying. Bystanders also mentioned inclusion as an effective intervention response. Involving peers in activities was seen as a way to mitigate relational bullying, especially during groupwork. Providing multiple methods of communication for groupmates, as well as probing and involving all members were seen as helpful ways for involvement.

Bystanders noted intervention strategies focused on addressing the bullying situation. Direct confrontation in a situation was frequently identified, yet bystanders' perceptions of the effectiveness of confrontation was mixed. Prior research found that

peer confrontation of bullies (whether angry or friendly) was seen doing as much harm as good (Davis & Nixon, 2010). Bystanders in the current study described confrontation as a helpful strategy for relational bullying, often due to college students being especially influenced by close others. Yet, confrontation was seen as a problematic response in situations involving strangers. Bystanders could not predict strangers' reactions to confrontation and feared escalation.

Another response mentioned by students, especially as being unhelpful, was reporting the incident. Many college personnel urge students to report bullying, yet bystanders identified barriers to reporting incidents. Consistent with past literature (Bhat, 2008; Wozencroft et al., 2015), most students in the current study were unsure of the university's bullying policies and reporting protocols. In order words, students were not aware whether the university had a bullying policy or whom to contact to report incidents. This is essential information that can be shared with students to prevent this uncertainty. Also, students would not report bullying perceived as insufficient, meaning reporting bullying was only likely for direct forms of aggression. This finding is parallel to prior research suggesting that bystanders' intention to report bullying increases as the severity of aggression increases, especially for physical incidents (Nicksa, 2013).

Several students mentioned that even if they reported bullying, they expected to receive ineffective help. Students, especially in dorms, discussed receiving insufficient support when previously reporting bullying, thus they were reluctant to involve others in future incidents. A few bystanders though that their college peers should manage bullying themselves, reducing their intention to report. Other bystanders would not report bullying if they did not know the situation or people involved. Last, some bystanders wanted the

consent and help from bullied peers to report bullying, rather than doing it on their own. College personnel can address these reporting barriers in future intervention efforts. It is also important to explore who reporting best serves. While many participants in the current study would not engage in the formal systems of reporting bullying incidents, they engaged in a perceived informal system about the topic, namely this study. This dialectic raises the question of who reporting best serves; in other words, who is reporting bullying good and helpful for?

A relatively new bystander response noted by students was recording the bullying incident as proof for the target. Given the emergence of technology in the lives of young adults (Twenge, 2017), using a cellphone to videotape incidents was frequently noted. However, bystanders identified several ethical caveats for filming bullying. Recording the incident was mentioned as appropriate when the bystander was incapable of helping the victim firsthand, and when it was offered to the target afterward for evidence and deleted per the target's request. Several students with low self-efficacy mentioned this as a possible way they could help. Whereas the prior situation-focused strategies involved addressing the situation (i.e., confrontation, report, record), the last two responses focused on disengaging from the bullying. Bystanders identified distracting the bully and ignoring the situation as responses. These were often mentioned for relational bullying, such as changing the topic when a friend bullied or ignoring the situation.

Students were asked about any educational experiences they had while in college about bullying. Most students did not recall receiving any information about bullying. For those students who did, they mentioned receiving possible education from online modules, freshman orientation, or course syllabi. Yet, they were usually unsure whether it

was specific to bullying. Students suggested several ways for colleges to increase awareness about bullying and peer interventions. Students preferred learning in group-based discussion formats, such as the focus groups employed in this study. During the span of the focus groups, students realized their own improved awareness of peer interactions, and prior bullying involvement as a target and/or perpetrator.

Students thought that bullying education would be best administered in relevant or introductory courses. Also, that instructors could integrate bullying curriculum and actives in short segments throughout the semester. Many students were unaware of the college's bullying definition, policy, resources, and consequences. Thus, they opined that simply receiving and talking about bullying polices as useful. Students also felt that using factual college-bullying case studies would be impactful for education, as well as having the opportunity to practice intervention skills with role-play scenarios.

BIM: Step 5. Although bystanders noticed bullying, interpreted harm, were motivated to help, and knew how to help, their intention to intervene depended on several characteristics. First, the location of the situation influenced bystanders' intervention responses. Although bystanders perceived online bullying as especially hurtful, they were less inclined to intervene online compared to offline. Bullying cues were described as easier to overlook for online incidents. Bystanders also feared retaliation for online interventions and were thus likely to intervene privately online rather than publicly. Bystanders were more likely to intervene in situations that occurred in public places, as that would at least have other people around to see the situation and help if needed. Not surprisingly, bystanders were less inclined to intervene when the bullying occurred at night. They feared for their own safety and ability to get home unharmed when seeing

bullying in the evening. Bystanders mentioned being more inclined to intervene on behalf of friends who bully in private settings compared to public settings. They viewed this as a mechanism for the bully to save face and better understand the bystander's concerns.

Bystanders also identified factors about the perpetrator that influenced their intervention intentions. If the bullying escalated to physical aggression or involved a weapon, bystanders' intention to help directly declined. At this point, participants felt the need to preserve their own safety by getting away from the situation, and perhaps taking indirect steps such as reporting the incident. Intentions to directly help also decreased when the bully was in a group and the bystander was alone. Female bystanders mentioned hesitation to intervene in situations involving male preparators. Bystanders who perceived bullies as under the influence of alcohol or drugs were also less inclined to intervene. In addition, the physical size of the bully affected bystanders' intention to help. Some bystanders mentioned that physical size was the first noticeable power resource in situations. Last, confronting a bully who was of a dominant race or ethnicity prohibited intervention responses from those bystanders of a minority group.

The last factor influencing intervention intentions was factors about other bystanders in the situation. Participants used the presence of other bystanders and their responses as a way to gauge what they should do. The bystander effect was alive and well among college students observing bullying. As extensively documented in the literature, the presence of many other bystanders in a bullying situation made peers less inclined to help (Nickerson et al., 2008; Obermaier et al., 2016). Yet, having the support from other bystanders or friends propelled intentions to intervene. Admittedly, interventions are inhibited when bystanders do not expect support from others (Atlas & Pepler, 2001).

Students in the present study said that, if they observed other bystanders reacting negatively to the bullying and who would support their intervention efforts, they were more likely to intervene. Congruent with prior bystander literature, peer familiarity matters when students decide whether and how to intervene in bullying. One study found that peer bystanders were less likely to intervene in situations when they knew no one and were most likely to intervene in situations when witnesses or targets were known (Dessel, Goodman, & Woodford, 2016).

However, students suggested that the presence of higher authorities in bullying situations deflected their intention to intervene. Bystanders are less likely to intervene when they think that other bystanders are more competent than they are (Latané & Darley, 1970). If bullying occurred in classrooms with professors, students perceived them as most capable of intervening. Bystanders in situations in which older students, college faculty, or security guards were present felt less intention to help. Another study found that older college students were more inclined to intervene in bullying targeted at LGBTQ students (Dessel et al., 2016). Student bystanders likely compare their qualities and skills to other bystanders present in the situation to discern whether they or someone else is most appropriate to help. Furthermore, when bystanders observe the inaction of individuals perceived as the most appropriate helpers in the emergency situation, it allows bystanders to define inaction as appropriate and redefine the situation as not requiring intervention help (Piliavin, Piliavin, & Rodin, 1975). It is therefore important for college instructors and competent bystanders to intervene so bullying in classrooms and social groups do not become normalized. Students clearly assessed dynamics of the bullying location, bully, and other bystanders before implementing a response.

Another model that can further illustrate the bystander intervention process is Piliavin et al.'s (1969) cost-reward analysis of helping. This model assumes an economic view of human helping behavior, such that individuals are motivated to maximize their rewards and to minimize their costs. The model specifies that the observation of an emergency situation creates an emotional arousal in bystanders (e.g., fear, disgust, sympathy). The bystander's state of arousal can be increased by various factors, such as empathy with the victim, being close to the emergency, and the length of time the emergency continues for. The bystander can reduce the state of arousal by helping, seeking help from another source, leaving the scene, or deciding the person does not need or deserve help. Piliavin et al. claim that the chosen response depends on a cost-reward analysis by the bystander. The cost-reward analysis includes: 1) costs of helping, such as effort, embarrassment, or retaliation, 2) costs of not helping, including self-blame or relational damage, 3) rewards of helping, such as praise from self, onlookers and the victims, and 4) rewards of not helping, including getting on with one's own business. In an emergency, potential helpers analyze the circumstances, weigh the probable costs and rewards of alternative courses of action, and then arrive at a decision that will result in the best personal outcome for them (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981). For example, bystanders in the current study were less inclined to intervene in bullying situations involving alcohol. This was likely due to a greater perceived cost (e.g., helping could put themselves at harm) and lower cost of not helping (e.g., other witnesses could be less likely to elicit shame or guilt for non-intervention).

Multiple goals theory (Caughlin, 2010) can also help illustrate bystander intervention responses to bullying. The framework suggests that interpersonal messages

have a calculated effect on individuals' level of satisfaction within specific interactions, as well as on relational well-being and message production. Goals do not simply shape messages; goals shape the *interpretation* of messages (Caughlin, 2010). A multiple-goals approach allows bullying researchers to connect bystander behavior with social norms and victimization outcomes in distinct ways. Bystanders can be strategic in managing their own and others' identity, and they can also initiate and maintain a specific relationship with other parties. Also, bystanders have the capability to exhibit differing behaviors because they have multiple, prioritized goals. Prior research documents the multiple goals that cyberbullying bystanders simultaneously used when assessing their role and response, such as honor proximity, respond according to severity, and avoid personal consequences (Jones & Savage, 2018). Student bystanders in the current study also identified similar goals and responses used for bullying interventions.

Overall, this qualitative analysis explored college students' perceptions and beliefs about bullying and bystander interventions, including their experiences with intervening in peer bullying situations. This formative research offers audience insights to develop evidence-based campaigns oriented at increasing bystander interventions (DeMaria et al., 2015). In fact, health communication campaigns should be built on rigorous formative audience research (Noar et al., 2009). As DeMaria et al. (2015) suggest, "Conducting focus group discussions offers researchers an opportunity to develop messaging and programming using participant-driven knowledge, ideas, and language, which resonate well with the targeted audience" (p. 16). The qualitative representation of bystanders' experiences with and perceptions about bullying in this study inform future campaign efforts.

Pre- and post-test intervention data. The second goal of this dissertation was to analyze whether participation in long-term focus groups served as a bullying intervention. Prior research (Tracy & Rievera, 2010) found that the qualitative method used to garner data can change participants' perspectives. The current study predicted that students who participated in the intervention would increase in scores for bystander interventions (*H1*), empathy (*H2*), self-efficacy (*H3*), and decrease in victim-blaming attributions (*H4*). Students who participated in the focus group intervention scored significantly higher on bystander interventions to bullying compared to those participants in the control group. In other words, participants in the intervention were more likely to notice bullying (Step 1), interpret harm in situations (Step 2), feel responsible to intervene (Step 3), know how to help (Step 4), and intend to intervene (Step 5). The focus groups clearly influenced shifts in bystanders' cognitive processes regarding the steps to intervention. The BIM has great potential to improve bystanders' attitudes and behaviors for supporting bullied peers.

Results from this study support framing bystander interventions within a five-step decision-making process. Interventions should explicitly teach each step of the BIM. This education would increase the likelihood that peers can identify bullying incidents, interpret harm, accept responsibility for helping, learn the skills and options for intervening, and implement intervention decisions. Although most bullying interventions do not adhere to this theoretical framework, a recent meta-analysis of bullying prevention programs indicated that bystander interventions increased for students in intervention compared to control conditions (Polanin et al., 2012). Bystander training campaigns have shown the ability to cross over into other campus safety initiatives (Banyard, Moynihan, & Crossman, 2009). More recently, colleges have implemented bystander intervention

training models focused on sexual assault and harassment. Prior research documented support for their effectiveness (e.g., Nickerson et al., 2014), particularly with the use of focus group discussions (DeMaria et al., 2015). Colleges would benefit from extending training models to include bullying and discriminatory harassment.

Participants in the intervention did not score significantly higher on empathy (*H2*) and self-efficacy scores (*H3*), nor scored lower on victim-blame attribution scores (*H4*), than those participants in the control group. There are several explanations for these findings. First, the organization of the focus groups were informed by the BIM, starting with questions and education about how students notice and perceive bullying as a situation in need of help (Step 1 & 2; Meeting #1), factors that motivate interventions (Step 3; Meeting #2), knowledge of strategies (Step 4; Meeting #3), and factors that influence intervention implementation (Step 5; Meeting #4). The focus group sessions were not specific to topics of empathy, blame attributions, and self-efficacy. It is therefore understandable why the intervention had significant results for the BIM measures, and not empathy, blame attributions, and self-efficacy.

In addition, participants in both the control and treatment group scored relatively high on pre-test measures of empathy and self-efficacy, as well low on victim-blame attribution scores. The highly skewed scores on these variables inhibits the identification of significant differences among groups (Kao & Green, 2008). Research on school-aged children tends to find more variation in empathy, self-efficacy, and blame attribution scores (e.g., Oh & Hazler, 2009). Also, research reports stronger relationships for empathy and self-efficacy with bullying attitudes and behaviors among younger children than older children (Kane, 2015). It might be the case that college students have a greater

understanding and awareness of bullying issues compared to school-aged children. College students have already gone through the terrain of middle and high school, and perhaps experienced bullying prior to college. As a matter of fact, 76% (n = 115) of the participants in this study reported previously being bullied. Thus, there might be less variability on these measures for college students.

There are several ways to target these variables in future bullying prevention research. First, the focus group questions probed for students to discuss their experiences as bystanders to bullying. Given that empathy is the ability to understand and feel the emotions of others (Schacter et al., 2016), it is likely that empathy did not change because the intervention did not include bullied targets. Empathy may improve when students have the opportunity to listen to bullied targets' experiences and stories, rather than solely listen to the stories of other peer bystanders. Given that many bystanders in the study reported being bullied during college, a group discussion format that probes for both experiences as bullied targets and bystanders may better influence empathy.

One promising direction for improving positive bystander behavior is through perspective-taking and empathy training (Salmivalli et al., 2014; Schacter et al., 2016). Programs that increase bystanders' awareness of their role in situations, particularly in online and stranger contexts where interventions were more unlikely, will be crucial next steps for bullying research. Also, bystanders who reinforce, assist, or remain passive during bullying tend to not value the well-being of the target. This might reflect the belief that bullying is the peer's fault and deserved (Desmet et al., 2012). One strategy to improve empathy and decrease victim-blame attributions is utilizing visual scenarios of

situations in which students imagine themselves as being bullied, and hear what others say and think about them (e.g., they deserved or asked for it; Pöyhönen et al., 2012).

Furthermore, it is likely easier for bystanders to accurately attribute blame in bullying situations with low ambiguity, compared to high ambiguity. Many participants in the current study described various bullying situations as ambiguous. Participants also mentioned barriers for identifying roles in bullying (i.e., the bully from the target), especially in stranger, high ambiguity contexts. Who provoked the bullying or whether the situation involved retaliation were barriers bystanders identified for interpreting harm. Recall that the definition of bullying identifies an inequitable power imbalance among the bully and target. Spreading awareness about bullying dynamics can better equip bystanders to interpret harm in a situation with less ambiguity of who is at fault. For instance, observing the nonverbal communication of those involved in a situation to discern power imbalances, such as facial expressions, body language, and inability to defend oneself. Students would also benefit from understanding the differences between bullying episodes and conflict or drama. Conflict or drama episodes involve the exchange of reciprocal hostility, whereas bullying does not (Sumner et al., 2018). Understanding the subtle differences among bullying and conflict may help students better identify and interpret harm in situations, as well as attribute blame.

Future research oriented at improving students' intervention self-efficacy should adapt role-play training sessions, in addition to focus groups. The current study did not provide opportunities for participants to practice what they learned regarding bystander responses. Research shows that interventions are effective when students can practice effective bystander skills with role-plays (Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). Future

research should design and implement hypothetical bullying scenarios focused on improving self-efficacy. Students would gain from having an opportunity to think through and identify appropriate responses to bullying situations given various contextual (e.g., severity) and relational circumstances (e.g., strangers).

Bystander strategy evaluations. The last goal of this project was to have students evaluate intervention responses to bullying. Students assessed the helpfulness, safeness, and directness of 28 bystander responses to online and offline bullying. These results extend research reported by The Youth Voice Research Project (Davis & Nixon, 2010), which presented evaluations from bullied students about the helpfulness of 14 in-person bystander responses. Data from the current study extend these findings by considering other pertinent factors that affect bystander responses, namely safety and directness. The current study also assessed responses for both online and offline bullying. Given the rise of cyberbullying, it was essential to examine online bystander interventions.

The five intervention strategies rated as most helpful, according to mean ratings, fell under the defender bystander role. Additionally, results from the principal components analysis (PCA) identified 15 items (bystander strategies) measuring helpful evaluations. The strategies viewed as helpful were largely target-focused (e.g., social support, inclusion) and situation-focused (e.g., de-escalation, remove target). Two strategies (the lowest sized items) were bully-focused, namely confrontation and distraction. Helping the target escape the bullying situation, manage distressing emotions, and de-escalate the situation were viewed as effective bystander strategies. The five strategies rated as least helpful (mean ratings) were all considered pro-bully bystander behaviors, namely the reinforcer and outsider roles. The PCA revealed seven items that

made up responses deemed as unhelpful, which were also pro-bully strategies. Unhelpful bystander responses were seen as participating in the aggression (e.g., make fun of, blame), escalating the situation (e.g., spread lies), and avoidance (e.g., do nothing).

The five strategies rated as most safe according to mean ratings were focused on offering social support to the target after the incident. The PCA identified 14 strategies that made up safe intervention responses, such as target-focused strategies (e.g., provision of social support, inclusion). The five strategies rated as most unsafe (mean ratings) were all also considered pro-bully bystander roles. According to the PCA, seven items assessed unsafe bystander responses, which were pro-bully strategies, including joining in with the attacks and escalating the situation. The bystander could be at risk of retaliation by the bullied target, bully, or other bystanders by joining in with the attacks.

The five responses rated as most direct (mean ratings) were all verbal communication strategies focused on offering social support to the target or were direct confrontations. Whereas, the five strategies rated as most indirect were often nonverbal, passive bystander responses, such as behaviors that reinforced or ignored bullying. However, the PCA identified three-components for the measure assessing directness, including seven items tapping *direct target support*, four items tapping *direct bully support*, and four items tapping *indirect support*. Direct strategies involved verbally supporting the target or bully. Indirect responses were nonverbal behaviors aimed at de-escalating the situation and inclusion.

In addition to evaluating the helpfulness of each bystander response, assessing the directness and safeness were equally as important. Many bystanders remain passive due to fear of harm, retaliation, and loss of social status. Some students believe that they need

to perform heroic acts to show support, such as direct confrontation (Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). Confrontation is more direct and potentially unsafe for the bystander. Campuses can use these evaluations in campaigns to inform students about safe and effective ways to intervene. For instance, getting the bullied peer away from the situation, or talking to the peer after the incident and providing emotional support to help reduce distress were evaluated as helpful and safe. This will be especially useful for students who remain passive when witnessing bullying. They perceive themselves as sometimes helpless in changing the situation into the direction they want (i.e., they value bullying decreasing, but do not think they can make it happen; Pöyhönen et al., 2012). However, even small acts of support can be very meaningful to the target (Rigby, 2000).

A particularly salient dialectical tension was evident for peer bystanders regarding cyberbullying interventions, such that a division existed between bystanders' attitudes and ultimate behavioral responses. Many participants perceived cyberbullying as harmful due to its large audience and permeance, yet felt the behavior was hard to curtail effectively online; thus, they reinforced online bullying through ignorance or encouragement. Participants said it was easier to overlook and avoid cues to online bullying, and feared retaliation by the bully or other bystanders. As Jones and Savage (2018) suggest, bystanders' adaption to the status quo fosters a power imbalance that supports online bullies and restricts prosocial responses. Future interventions should help bystanders find ways to recognize their goals, evaluate those goals relative to the target's well-being and safety, and offer examples of ways to confront the bully and/or support the target, thereby empowering bystanders to adopt prosocial bystander roles. Moreover, some participants mentioned that cyberbullying incidents might be better handled with

private interventions (e.g., message with support) than public interventions (e.g., replying to the bully's comment). The online intervention strategies evaluated in the current study as more indirect, yet safe and helpful include adding the bullied target as a friend on social media, removing the bully as a friend, and reporting the cyberbullying. Intervention research would benefit from incorporating the bystander responses reported in the current study into curriculum to promote prosocial bystander behaviors.

These findings contribute to theoretical knowledge about bystander behaviors. Bystander research generally specifies *defending* behaviors as standing up for the target or offering support afterward (Pöyhönen & Salmivalli, 2008). Yet, there are more wide-ranging defending-communicative behaviors that bystanders can engage in depending on their motivations and abilities. For instance, the bystander can report the incident, get others to leave the situation, and include the target (e.g., involve the person in activities or groupwork, or add them on social media). These evaluations illustrate the range of intervention options to online and offline bullying incidents as a mechanism to reduce passive and avoidant bystander roles.

Implications

Policy and reporting protocols. Universities have a responsibility to protect students by providing a safe physical and digital environment. Colleges should enact bullying legislation and policies, as well as implement programs addressing group and peer interventions. Universities need to empower students to request assistance, and ensure they prepare personnel adequately so that when bullying reports are made, they are effectively managed. In order to accomplish this, it is first essential for policy makers to understand the significance of making specific policies to their university setting with

clear guidelines for students about when and to whom to report bullying incidents. A clear bullying policy detailing procedure and protocols for university personnel and students to follow can increase the likelihood of reporting online and offline incidents (Bhat, 2008; Cassidy et al., 2013). As Cassidy et al. (2013) point out, if bullying is not reported, the policy is ineffective. To improve the policy, institutions need to understand and address the underpinnings of bullying incidents not being reported. A campaign focused on promoting active bystander behavior is likely to be effective if it includes explicit acknowledgments of the barriers to intervention obtained from the target audience (Exner & Cummings, 2011; Potter & Stapleton, 2011). Translating barriers into components of the intervention, and into language and settings experienced by the target audience enhances the campaign's resonance with the audience (DeMaria et al., 2015).

Reporting protocols should provide knowledge about appropriate campus resources to contact, such as a trusted faculty member or school administrator (e.g., counselor, advisor, coach), the office of student conduct, or campus police (Rosenberg, 2011). Students feel that success in reporting bullying incidents to an authority figure depends their proximity and closeness, such as reporting to someone who knows the target, as they are more likely to help and follow through to make sure it stops (Jones & Savage, 2018). It is also imperative for university officials to ensure that reports are properly followed through. Given that some students did not intend to report bullying because they viewed it as unhelpful, college administration should focus on increasing students' intentions to report incidents to offer reassurance that their reports will be examined, and actions will be taken. Students feel more inclined to report bullying if they have confidence that an authority figure will help and result in subsequent action to

remediate the incident (Wozencraft et al., 2015). For a culture of reporting bullying, it is necessary that authority figures respond quickly and effectively to reports.

University personnel who receive reports should feel confident that the design of the policy allows them to manage incidents. Student bystanders mentioned a particular concern for resident assistants responding to bullying reports in dorms. Perhaps these individuals can work with college counselors and student affair professionals to coordinate response strategies to incidents. For instance, help seeking behaviors of university students are more likely to mirror those individuals in workplaces rather than children and adolescents in schools (Wozencraft et al., 2015). College bullying policies should perhaps be adapted from those used in workplace settings.

Many college students, Gen Zers in particular, heavily rely on their mobile devices. Offering professional health assistance beyond the normal work hours can be critical for this "24/7, always on" generation (Twenge, 2017). As many Gen Zers prefer text message to communicate, an emergency text or chat feature may be a useful method of contact that could increase the reporting and management of bullying incidents. This study provides researchers, counselors, and administrative personnel with an extensive understanding of college bullying through the perspective of bystanders.

Relational aggression. The current study indicated that students' experiences of witnessing bullying often involved relational aggression. This finding provides insight into the promotion of effective bystander interventions. Relational aggression was often a group process. Targeting peer witnesses' behaviors in the context of relational aggression can be more helpful than focusing on only peer aggressors and targets. Relational bullying was reported as particularly harmful from bystanders in the current study and

research documents the psychosocial consequences for peer victims (You & Bellmore, 2014). Some students may be unaware of the detrimental effects on the targets of relational bullying, and perhaps ignore the severity of those behaviors compared to overt bullying. An effort should be made to increase awareness about the negative implications of relationally aggressive behaviors. This study indicates that it will be important in prevention work to counter the normative beliefs about the acceptability of relational aggression and educate emerging adults about its negative implications for victims (Leff, Waasdorp, & Crick, 2010). More study is needed to identify other factors that increase the likelihood of peers adopting pro-victim behaviors. These factors can be implemented in intervention work to encourage prosocial bystander behaviors for relational aggression (You & Bellmore, 2014).

The relationship between the bystander and target was a key determinant of interventions. Prior quantitative research documented that closeness with the target of bullying was strongly associated with defending and supporting the target among school-aged children (Oh & Hazler, 2009; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Consistent with these findings, the present study revealed that bystanders' closeness to the target was the most commonly reported motivation for interventions. These results contribute to this literature by revealing the importance of relational closeness for bystander interventions among college students, in addition to offering rich qualitative data to explicate this finding.

There are several explanations for why student bystanders were motivated to help close others. First, bystanders may have perceived few costs for not intervening among strangers compared to close friends. Bystanders in the current study identified relational expectations and reciprocity as motivating factors for intervening on behalf of close

friends. Second, high ambiguity was a factor that affected whether or not students in the current study intervened in bullying. Bystanders were less likely to intervene in high ambiguity situations, which often involved strangers. It might be the case that bullying situations involving close others were perceived as less ambiguous, thus motivated peer interventions. This is just speculation and something worthy of future research.

Another explanation for motivations to intervene on behalf of close others deals with group cohesion and social identity. Bystanders are more likely to help victims perceived as in-group as opposed to out-group members (Levine et al., 2002). Bystanders in the current study felt motivated when they empathized with being bullied, as well as identified with the reason why the target was attacked. Group cohesion may explain bystanders' helping behavior. Group cohesiveness involves members of a social group acting in unity to satisfy a goal or emotional needs of its members (Rutkowski, Gruder, & Romer, 1983). Rutkowski et al. (1983) argue that the social responsibility norm affects helping behavior, which claims that individuals should help others who are in need and dependent on them. The more cohesive the group, the more likely the group will act in accordance with social responsibility norms. Research found that high cohesive groups were more willing and quicker to help a hurt victim in the group compared to low cohesive groups (Rutkowski et al., 1983). Not only were bystanders more inclined to help in situations involving close others, but having the encouragement and support from other bystanders, especially close others, increased motivations to help.

Prior research suggests that increased group size inhibited interventions when bystanders were strangers (i.e., bystander effect), yet encouraged intervention when bystanders were friends (Levine & Crowther, 2008). Moreover, prior quantitative

research (Dessel et al., 2016; Levine & Crowther, 2008) and the qualitative research from the current study found that identity was a salient factor for interventions, such that interventions were more likely when bystanders and bullies and/or victims shared social category membership. The bystander effect was not a generic consequence of increasing group size of other bystanders. When bystanders share group-level psychological relationships, such as closeness, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, group size can encourage as well as inhibit helping behavior (Dessel et al., 2016). Social identity and empathy likely explained these trends. Self-categorization theory (Levine & Thompson, 2010) claims that a person's social identity and well-being are connected to their group membership. When a group-based identity is salient, the suffering of one group member can affect the group. Because of the group's shared identity, bystanders are more able to empathize, which predicts helping behavior.

The bystander's relationship with the bully also influenced interventions. Chaux (2005) reported that bystanders were more likely to support the member of a bullying incident to whom they felt closer, whether that was the bully or victim. Most of the bystanders in the current study were likely to intervene on behalf of friends who bully, as they fear consequences and repercussions for them. However, a handful of students were less inclined to intervene on behalf of close friends who bully, due to fear of harming the relationship. Yet, many of those bystanders also noted that once the bullying got to a certain threshold of severity, they would intervene regardless.

Research on school-aged children found that their closeness to the bully predicted negative bystander behavior, including assisting or reinforcing (Oh & Hazler, 2009). It might be the case that school-aged children were more reluctant to stop a close friend

bullying others due to fear of social costs, whereas college-aged students might be more confident and willing to stop friends. This finding encourages college personnel to give attention to friendship dynamics in order to recognize and encourage those who are most likely to be productive in an ongoing bullying situation, namely those bystanders with close relationships to both bullies and targets. Given that bystanders were more inclined to help whichever member in a situation to whom they were closer, future research would benefit from analyzing the dual role of a bystander's relationship with those involved. For instance, a bystander who is both relationally close to the bully and target. Furthermore, campaign efforts should foster prosocial intergroup attitudes and behaviors in the cases of bullying, discriminatory harassment, and social exclusion (Dessel et al., 2016).

Group-based discussions. The group-based discussion format utilized in the current study served as beneficial. Focusing on the subjective experiences of bystanders spotlights the way they make sense of peer bullying situations. This format allowed students to share their experiences of witnessing bullying, as well as identify reasons why they would and would not intervene in situations. A recent meta-analysis of bullying interventions found that programs were effective at changing bystander intervening behaviors when there were opportunities for students to discuss reasons why they might not intervene (Polanin et al., 2012). In one study, students who learned about the bystander effect in class were more likely to intervene in an emergency later (Beaman et al., 1978). In addition to the bystander effect, discussing other situational features that make bystanders hesitate to intervene (e.g., ambiguity, retaliation) can help students better overcome them. Education about factors that inhibit helping behavior can encourage students to intervene regardless of whether the target was a close friend or

stranger, or if the bullying occurred in front of a large audience or if the student was the only one who saw it (Brody & Vangelisti, 2015).

Students could profit from identifying and reflecting on their experiences of witnessing bullying. Colleges should provide students space in which they can discuss issues, experiences, and uncertainties that they usually do not articulate. It may not be until they hear themselves talk that they identify outdated and problematic scripts, thus changing the scripts that they have been operating under. As Tracy and Rievera (2010) claim, through hearing what they say, people can pause, rearticulate, and in doing so, provide space to rethink and redo. The mere recognition and identification of experiences and barriers to bullying interventions allows individuals to better comprehend how they frame and limit their viewpoints about bullying (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006). These reflections and discussions have the power to transform bullying experiences for observers, possibly making them more inclined to defend targets.

Colleges can implement education sessions about bullying and bystander interventions, as well as group discussions for students to share their stories and learn from the stories of peers. Although DeMaria et al. (2015) found that college students in their study about bystander interventions to sexual assault preferred receiving campaign information via their mobile phones, the students in the current study did not prefer online campaign communication about bystander interventions to bullying. Many participants mentioned incorporating education and group-discussion sessions into courses (e.g., relevant classes, freshman seminars) to effectively target students. Freshman orientation and seminars provide a captive audience to receive bystander intervention information (Foubert, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Brasfield, & Hill, 2010). The

implementation of the group-based discussions could also be administered by instructors in classes or student leaders. Students felt more attentive and accountable for bullying education disseminated during class.

Students identified as leaders could work with groups of peers to share bullying experiences, discuss intervention barriers, and identify appropriate responses. Often times, bystanders who stand up for bullied peers have high social status, are well liked, and have strong moral sensibilities (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The high status of defenders makes these bystanders ideal peer supporters for intervention programs, as they are capable of influencing their peer group (Salmivalli, 1999). Peer facilitation allows student leaders to translate the messages in a common and relatable manner (Foubert et al., 2010). Overall, students described an effective mixed method campaign with freshman orientation, curriculum integration, peer-interaction programs, and ongoing promotion.

Future Directions and Limitations

Taken that the BIM is imbedded within situational and relational cues from others, it is essential to further analyze aspects of the peer context in relation to interventions. Bystanders who defend bullied peers tend to be well liked and have high peer status (Nickerson et al., 2014). Although not examined in this study, it may be that the bystander's status in the peer group influences the relationship between individual variables and bystander interventions. One study found that empathy and self-efficacy were only associated with defending behavior for students perceived as popular by peers (Pöyhönen et al., 2010). Although no significant results were reported in the current study for empathy and self-efficacy, it might be the case that the bystander's social status plays a role in this relation (Nickerson et al., 2014). The BIM should be used to further

explicate bystander interventions within a wider social-ecological model that considers the various influences on the process not analyzed here.

The results from the pre- and post-test intervention should be interpreted with caution. This study did not employ a true experimental design to assess for differences among the intervention and control groups (Campbell & Stanely, 1963). First, participants self-selected into the study; therefore, it is likely that they had a vested interest in the topic. Also, there was not random assignment of participants into groups and two different forms of compensation were provided. Participants in the intervention group received monetary compensation, whereas participants in the control group received extra credit points in courses. Given the limited monetary resources of the study, participants in the treatment group received monetary compensation for their time. There was an unequal number of participants in the intervention group (n = 36) compared to the control group (n = 115). The participants were also predominantly female, and from an urban, public liberal arts and sciences university. Future research should administer a similar intervention using a true experimental design with a more varied sample.

It is important to iterate the cultural circumstances in which the data are situated, namely the regional and political contexts. First, the data were gathered from students at the University of Minnesota, which is characterized by midwestern regional cultural norms. For instance, Southerners are more likely than Midwesterners to reactively aggress in response to perceived social threats (Howell, Buckner, & Weeks, 2015). People from Minnesota are particularly characterized as being passive-aggressive and non-confrontational (i.e., “Minnesota nice”; Atkins, 2008). Jones (2009) suggests that *Minnesota nice* is not so much about being "nice” yet is more about keeping up

appearances and maintaining the social order; social norms emerging from Scandinavian culture. There are likely regional differences in the experiences of college-student bystanders and their reactions to bullying, a notable area of future research.

Second, the study's findings are constituted in the current U.S. political context. Recall that the college-student bystanders most frequently observed bullying targeted at their peers' race/nationality. The fact that international students in the current study were often described as targets of relational bullying (e.g., exclusion, ignorance) in class and group contexts is alarming. An important and unanswered question is: What extent does the larger political context influence the international student experience of college bullying? There has been a rise of intimidation and fear tactics in U.S. political life, which has been cultivated by the current administration's normalization of bullying behaviors (Reid, 2017). Intimidation strategies are increasingly part of the political mainstream culture, which emerged in the campaign and post-election actions of Donald Trump, whose political style embodies bullying practices (Reid, 2017).

The Trump administration has targeted specific communities and social institutions with public bullying, namely immigrants and international countries. Steinberg et al. (2017) characterize the Trump administration as advancing racial inequality and alienation. The term *immigrant bullying* has recently emerged to connote situations involving derogatory references to an immigrant's status through verbal abuse and taunts, social manipulation, and physical aggression (Donovan, 2011). An important area of research is the prevention of the President's behavior from becoming the template for a new generation of students when developing problem-solving skill sets (Schneider, 2019). Researchers and professionals have recently addressed bullying issues for refugee

and immigration students in K-12 schools (Teasley, Nevarez, & Frost, 2017). It is also important to integrate education and resources aimed at the reduction of immigrant and international student bullying on college campuses.

In addition to reducing international student bullying, it is important to examine the role of international and immigrant students as peer bystanders to bullying. International and immigrant students are already in a vulnerable political, social, and educational situation (Teasley et al., 2017). That problem is exacerbated when those international students witness peer bullying situations requiring intervention responses. As many international students in the current study mentioned, they were less likely to intervene in bullying situations, given the power dynamics associated with race, ethnicity, and immigration, as well as security risks to their student and visa statuses. Perhaps these are not the individuals with the best intervention efficacy and resources to directly intervene in bullying situations. These individuals are likely best suited to implement indirect and safe bystander intervention responses (e.g., record the incident to offer the target afterward, provide emotional support, problem-solve).

Another limitation of the current study is that reported *intentions* of interventions were examined, rather than *actual* intervention behaviors. There are clearly barriers to behavioral intervention responses, such as self-efficacy. The connection among intentions to help and actual helping behavior is unclear (Dessel et al., 2016). Future research with longitudinal studies should analyze the relationship between bystander intervention intentions and behavioral actions to peer bullying situations. In addition, during the focus groups, students qualitatively realized their own prior bullying involvement as a target and/or perpetrator. Participants reported their own involvement in college bullying (i.e.,

target, bully) only at the pre-test of the study. A significant unanswered question from the current study is whether the focus groups influenced changes in participants reported identification as targets and/or bullies. Including the bullying involvement scale at both the pre- and post-tests can address this discrepancy in future research.

The current study had student bystanders evaluate the helpfulness, safeness, and directness of intervention responses. It is also important to examine how victimized students perceive the bullying intervention dimensions. There may be discrepancies in what bystanders and targets perceive as helpful, safe, and direct. Furthermore, to increase understanding of how to help bullied targets within the university, future qualitative research should explore the perspectives and challenges of victimized college students as they cope and work with others to mitigate bullying. It is crucial to learn from bystanders, as well as bullied targets and perpetrators. Despite its limitations, the present study contributes to the literature of college bullying through the exploration of bystanders' experiences and perceived barriers to peer interventions.

Conclusion

College bullying is a damaging health problem. It is important for communication research to understand the dynamics of student bullying. One such avenue for bullying efforts is peer bystander interventions. The current study advances the field of bystander interventions to college bullying, and potentially lowers the incidences of passive or avoidant peer bystander responses. Bullying prevention initiatives that involve education and group-dialogue sessions have great potential to improve bystanders' attitudes and behaviors that support bullied peers. Overall, this study's findings encourage campuses to adopt bystander intervention campaigns to curtail online and offline bullying incidents.

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Appendices

Table 1
Frequencies for Bullying Experiences and Locations

	%	*N*
Was Bullied	76%	115
Gossip, lies, rumors	72%	109
Exclusion	71%	107
Verbal	67%	101
Online	34%	51
Physical	24%	36
Bullied Others	56%	84
Exclusion	54%	82
Gossip, lies, rumors	52%	79
Verbal	40%	61
Online	25%	38
Physical	9%	13
Witnessed Bullying	100%	151
Gossip, lies, rumors	90%	136
Exclusion	85%	128
Verbal	78%	118
Online	74%	111
Physical	39%	59
Bullying Locations		
Outside campus areas	34%	51
Parties/social events	32%	49
Bars/restaurants	26%	40
University events	23%	34
Home/apartment/dorms	21%	32
Classrooms	21%	32
On/waiting for the bus	19%	28
Club organizations/meetings	15%	22
Hallways	14%	21
Athletic practice/games	14%	21

Note. *N* = number of participants, % = percentage out of 151 total participants

Table 2

Adjusted and Unadjusted Means and Variability for Post-Intervention Scores with Pre-Intervention Scores as a Covariate

	Unadjusted		*Adjusted*		*Sig.*	*Partial* η^2
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SE*		
BIM					<.001	0.16
Control	3.72	0.53	3.75	0.04		
Treatment	4.24	0.34	4.14	0.07		
Step 1: Notice					<.001	0.33
Control	2.76	0.86	2.83	0.05		
Treatment	4.19	0.52	3.96	0.11		
Step 2: Interpretation					<.001	0.10
Control	4.38	0.60	4.35	0.05		
Treatment	4.65	0.43	4.75	0.08		
Step 3: Motivation					<.05	0.03
Control	3.82	0.74	3.86	0.05		
Treatment	4.24	0.43	4.10	0.10		
Step 4: Knowledge					<.001	0.13
Control	3.52	0.83	3.54	0.06		
Treatment	4.13	0.52	4.08	0.10		
Step 5: Implementation					<.05	0.04
Control	3.95	0.72	3.95	0.05		
Treatment	4.19	0.43	4.21	0.09		
Empathy					>.05	<.001
Control	4.36	0.59	4.38	0.05		
Treatment	4.41	0.48	4.36	0.08		
Self-efficacy					>.05	<.001
Control	3.48	0.50	3.49	0.04		
Treatment	3.54	0.56	3.51	0.06		
Blame Attributions					>.05	<.001
Control	1.80	0.68	1.80	0.04		
Treatment	1.82	0.64	1.81	0.08		

Note. Control Group ($N = 115$), Treatment Group ($N = 36$), *M* = Mean, *SD* = Standard Deviation, *SE* = Standard Error, *Sig.* = Significance, *Partial* η^2 = Effect Size

Table 3

Bystander Strategy Mean Evaluations: Helpful vs Unhelpful	*M*	*SD*
Helpful		
Qu9: Get the bullied peer get away from the situation	4.50	0.73
Qu2: Walk with the bullied peer to class, the bus, or home	4.43	0.83
Qu6: Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you	4.41	0.97
Qu4: Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the peer	4.33	0.90
Qu28: Film the incident to offer the target afterward	4.28	0.90
Qu3: Help problem solve with the bullied peer and offer advice	4.26	0.90
Qu11: Stand up for the bullied peer during the situation	4.23	0.90
Qu1: Spend time with and include the bullied peer	4.21	0.98
Qu5: Tell the peer it is not their fault and do not deserve it	4.17	1.04
Qu24: Call or text the bullied peer to offer support	4.17	1.06
Qu25: Send the bullied peer an online supportive message	4.15	1.03
Qu8: Ask the bullied peer if they need help reporting and help	4.09	1.13
Qu23: Report the cyberbullying to the site where it occurred	4.01	1.17
Qu12: Confront the bully and tell them to stop	3.82	1.18
Qu10: Distract the bully during the situation	3.77	1.16
Qu7: Report the bullying to campus officials	3.66	1.23
Qu22: Get others to stop watching and move away	3.46	1.33
Qu20: Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying	3.29	1.47
Qu27: Friend or add the bullied peer to your online accounts	3.26	1.37
Unhelpful		
Qu18: Not join in with the bullying	3.23	1.48
Qu26: Unfriend or delete the bully from your online accounts	2.83	1.38
Qu21: Get others to watch the bullying situation	1.65	1.10
Qu15: Ignore the situation ("it is none of my business")	1.40	0.82
Qu19: Like, support, or forward online bullying	1.36	0.90
Qu13: Make fun of the bullied peer	1.28	0.73
Qu16: Do nothing	1.28	0.77
Qu14: Blame the bullied peer for being targeted	1.24	0.66
Qu17: Join in with the bullying	1.15	0.56

Note. Mean helpful score ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.42$, $N = 151$)

Table 4

Rotated Structure Matrix for PCA with Varimax Rotation of a Two Component Questionnaire of Helpful Evaluations

Items	Rotated Component Coefficients		
	Component 1: Helpful	Component 2: Unhelpful	Communalities
Qu24	**.663**	-.281	.519
Qu25	**.645**	-.297	.504
Qu23	**.621**	-.084	.392
Qu8	**.616**	-.206	.422
Qu6	**.579**	-.201	.376
Qu27	**.576**	.081	.338
Qu20	**.559**	.132	.330
Qu26	**.551**	.244	.363
Qu18	**.543**	.185	.329
Qu5	**.540**	-.176	.323
Qu7	**.479**	-.090	.238
Qu22	**.469**	.098	.230
Qu1	**.434**	-.241	.247
Qu12	**.400**	-.283	.240
Qu10	**.329**	-.246	.168
Qu17	-.033	**.845**	.716
Qu15	-.021	**.778**	.605
Qu16	.029	**.769**	.593
Qu14	-.193	**.714**	.547
Qu19	-.075	**.671**	.456
Qu13	-.143	**.663**	.460
Qu21	.134	**.540**	.309

Note. Major loadings for each factor are bolded

Table 5

Bystander Strategy Mean Evaluations: Safe vs Unsafe	*M*	*SD*
Safe		
Qu4: Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the bullied peer	4.48	0.86
Qu5: Tell the peer it is not their fault and they do not deserve it	4.46	0.89
Qu6: Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you	4.34	0.92
Qu3: Help problem solve with the bullied peer and offer advice	4.32	0.87
Qu8: Ask the bullied peer if they need help reporting and helping	4.30	0.95
Qu24: Call or text the bullied peer to offer support	4.28	1.03
Qu25: Send the bullied peer an online supportive message	4.28	0.99
Qu7: Report the bullying to campus officials	4.19	1.02
Qu1: Spend time with and include the bullied peer	4.18	0.97
Qu23: Report the cyberbullying to the site where it occurred	4.16	1.07
Qu20: Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying	4.03	1.10
Qu18: Not join in with the bullying	3.98	1.15
Qu2: Walk with the bullied peer to class, the bus, or home	3.90	1.00
Qu27: Friend or add the bullied peer to your online accounts	3.89	1.19
Qu26: Unfriend or delete the bully from your online accounts	3.78	1.14
Qu15: Ignore the bullying situation ("it is none of my business")	3.67	1.42
Qu16: Do nothing	3.63	1.55
Unsafe		
Qu22: Get others to stop watching and move away	3.50	1.17
Qu9: Get the bullied peer get away from the situation	3.39	1.16
Qu28: Film the incident to offer the target for evidence afterward	3.33	1.28
Qu10: Distract the bully during the situation	2.85	1.15
Qu 11: Stand up for the bullied peer during the situation	2.82	1.18
Qu12: Confront the bully and tell them to stop	2.72	1.10
Qu19: Like, support, or forward online bullying	2.68	1.38
Qu21: Get others to watch the bullying situation	2.58	1.34
Qu17: Join in with the bullying	2.39	1.53
Qu14: Blame the bullied peer for being targeted	2.13	1.41
Qu13: Make fun of the bullied peer	2.08	1.36

Note. Mean safeness score ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.50$, $N = 151$)

Table 6

Rotated Structure Matrix for PCA with Varimax Rotation of a Two Component Questionnaire of Safety

Items	Rotated Component Coefficients		
	Component 1: Safe	Component 2: Unsafe	Communalities
Qu5	**.782**	-.034	.612
Qu24	**.752**	.112	.578
Qu25	**.744**	.112	.567
Qu4	**.743**	-.071	.556
Qu6	**.719**	-.111	.529
Qu8	**.719**	-.062	.521
Qu3	**.705**	-.039	.498
Qu27	**.691**	.215	.523
Qu23	**.668**	.128	.462
Qu7	**.605**	.017	.366
Qu1	**.593**	-.078	.358
Qu20	**.541**	.195	.331
Qu26	**.449**	.128	.218
Qu22	**.388**	.055	.154
Qu17	.031	**.801**	.642
Qu19	-.068	**.764**	.588
Qu15	.157	**.716**	.538
Qu16	.139	**.710**	.524
Qu21	.041	**.705**	.498
Qu14	.036	**.691**	.479
Qu13	-.038	**.622**	.389

Note. Major loadings for each factor are bolded

Table 7

Bystander Strategy Mean Evaluations: Direct vs Indirect	*M*	*SD*
Direct		
Qu3: Help problem solve with the bullied peer and offer advice about	4.32	0.92
Qu12: Confront the bully and tell them to stop	4.28	0.99
Qu11: Stand up for the bullied peer during the situation	4.25	0.91
Qu5: Tell the peer that it is not their fault and they do not deserve it	4.22	1.08
Qu6: Ask the bullied peer if they need anything from you	4.17	1.07
Qu4: Offer concern, care, and encouragement to the bullied peer	4.09	1.07
Qu24: Call or text the bullied peer to offer support	4.06	1.21
Qu9: Get the bullied peer get away from the situation	4.05	1.04
Qu8: Ask the bullied peer if they need your help reporting and helping	3.95	1.16
Qu25: Send the bullied peer an online supportive message	3.90	1.19
Qu2: Walk with the bullied peer to class, the bus, or home	3.76	1.10
Qu1: Spend time with and include the bullied peer	3.74	1.26
Qu23: Report the cyberbullying to the site where it occurred	3.54	1.36
Qu7: Report the bullying to campus officials	3.50	1.40
Qu10: Distract the bully during the situation	3.41	1.21
Indirect		
Qu22: Get others to stop watching and move away	3.25	1.28
Qu28: Film the incident to offer the target for evidence afterward	3.11	1.37
Qu27: Friend or add the bullied peer to your online accounts	2.97	1.33
Qu14: Blame the bullied peer for being targeted	2.77	1.70
Qu13: Make fun of the bullied peer	2.75	1.68
Qu17: Join in with the bullying	2.60	1.65
Qu18: Not join in with the bullying	2.59`	1.42
Qu26: Unfriend or delete the bully from your online accounts	2.56	1.38
Qu20: Not like, not support, or not forward online bullying	2.51	1.38
Qu21: Get others to watch the bullying situation	2.34	1.28
Qu19: Like, support, or forward online bullying	2.25	1.35
Qu15: Ignore the bullying situation ("it is none of my business")	1.58	0.98
Qu16: Do nothing	1.58	1.07

Note. Mean directness score ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.45$, $N = 151$)

Table 8

Rotated Structure Matrix for PCA with Varimax Rotation of a Three Component Questionnaire of Directness

Items	Rotated Component Coefficients			
	Component 1: Direct target support	Component 2: Direct bully support	Component 3: Indirect	Communalities
Qu5	**.790**	-.051	.156	.650
Qu4	**.781**	.096	.162	.646
Qu6	**.767**	.026	.155	.612
Qu3	**.737**	.057	-.116	.560
Qu8	**.691**	-.157	.059	.504
Qu12	**.581**	.147	-.194	.397
Qu9	**.357**	-.216	-.079	.181
Qu14	.131	**.860**	-.190	.793
Qu13	.137	**.827**	-.194	.740
Qu17	-.110	**.777**	-.112	.628
Qu21	-.139	**.679**	.187	.516
Qu26	.025	-.019	**.796**	.635
Qu20	-.076	-.151	**.765**	.614
Qu27	.163	.079	**.708**	.534
Qu18	-.004	-.142	**.694**	.502

Note. Major loadings for each factor are bolded

Table 9

BIM Step 1: Noticing Bullying Categories	*N*	*%*
Bullying Cues		
Expression of hurt feelings	27	75%
Negative emotions	21	58%
Closed body language	11	31%
Fake laughing	8	22%
Isolation/distance	8	22%
Request for help	5	14%
Observation of power imbalance	25	69%
Unable to defend	18	50%
Physical size/group size	11	31%
Exhibition of aggressive behaviors	20	56%
Verbal	16	44%
Physical	12	33%
Intention to harm	20	56%
Unprovoked/unwanted	11	31%
Repetitive/severity of behaviors	14	39%
Barriers to Noticing Bullying		
Not paying attention	14	39%
Distracted with past or upcoming events	10	28%
Technology	9	25%
Public distance norms	7	19%

Note. N = number of participants, *%* = percentage out of 36 total participants

Table 10

BIM Step 1: College Bullying 101 Categories	*N*	*%*
Types		
Relational (denigration)	23	64%
Relational (exclusion)	17	47%
Online	13	36%
Verbal	12	36%
Relational (peer pressure)	9	25%
Physical	8	22%
Locations		
Class	19	53%
Text/group messages	15	42%
Dorms	13	36%
Social media	8	22%
Parties	6	17%
Campus streets/night	4	11%
Who was Involved		
Friends	18	50%
Groupmates	17	47%
Roommates	10	28%
Teammates/clubmates	9	25%
Classmates	6	17%
Strangers	5	14%
Focus of Attacks		
Race/nationality	16	44%
Appearance/clothing	16	44%
Low competencies	14	39%
Gender	8	22%
Age	7	19%
Social status	7	19%
Sexual orientation	5	14%
Disclosure violation	5	14%
Drinking	4	11%
Weight	4	11%
Disability	3	8%

Note. N = number of participants, *%* = out of 36 participants

Table 11

BIM Step 2: Interpreting Harm Categories	*N*	*%*
What Hurts		
Rumors/gossip	17	47%
Affects well-being	15	42%
Online/large audience	10	28%
Friend/social ramifications	9	25%
New students	9	25%
Barriers for Interpreting Harm		
Provoked/retaliation	22	61%
"Just friends" messing around	18	50%
Conflict/drama	16	44%

Note. *N* = number of participants, *%* = percentage out of 36 participants

Table 12

Step 3: Motivation to Help Categories	*N*	*%*
Internal Motivations		
Empathy	24	67%
Safety	20	56%
Self-efficacy	18	50%
High self-efficacy	11	31%
Low self-efficacy	7	19%
Morals	13	36%
External Motivations		
Target relationship	32	89%
Severity	27	75%
Uncontrollable attributions	26	71%
Race/ethnicity	16	44%
Disability	13	36%
Religion	8	22%
Sexual orientation	6	17%
Gender	4	11%
Bully relationship	22	61%
Motivated	15	42%
Not motivated	7	19%

Note. *N* = number of participants, *%* = percentage out of 36 participants

Table 13

BIM Step 4: Knowledge of Intervention Strategy Categories	*N*	*%*
Target-Focused Strategies		
Nurturant support	20	56%
Get them away from the situation	14	39%
Inclusion	11	31%
Problem-solve	9	25%
Improve self-efficacy	8	22%
Situation-focused Strategies		
Confrontation	26	72%
Report it/involve others	24	67%
Record it	14	39%
Distraction	11	31%
Ignore it	9	25%
Barriers to Reporting		
Unsure of policy or reporting	20	56%
Not sufficient enough	13	36%
Will not help	11	31%
Should handle alone	10	28%
Do not know story/people involved	8	22%
Want target consent	5	14%

Note. *N* = number of participants, *%* = percentage out of 36 participants

Table 14

BIM Step 4: Bullying Education Categories	*N*	*%*
Education Received in College		
None	21	58%
Online module	13	36%
Freshmen orientation	10	28%
Syllabus	8	22%
Effective Education Strategies		
Group discussions	19	53%
More aware of social interactions	13	36%
Bullied others	7	19%
Was bullied	6	17%
Class syllabus and integration	14	28%
Basic education (definition, policy, reporting)	13	36%
Case studies	13	36%
Hypothetical role plays	10	28%
Yearly online module	9	25%
Introduction class	9	25%
Bathroom stalls	8	22%

Note. *N* = numbers of participants, *%* = percentage out of 36 participants

Table 15

BIM Step 5: Intention to Intervene Categories	*N*	*%*
Location Characteristics		
Online	16	48%
Less	12	33%
More	4	11%
Public (more)	15	42%
Night (less)	13	36%
Private for friend who bullies	7	19%
Bully Characteristics		
Escalation/weapons	13	36%
Numerically superior	11	31%
Gender	9	25%
Alcohol	8	22%
Physical size	7	19%
Race/ethnicity	6	17%
Bystander Characteristics		
Others present (bystander effect)	24	67%
Support from others	23	64%
Higher authority present	11	31%

Note. *N* = number of participants, *%* = percentage out of 36 participants